

## **Rodents**



## **Diet**

Rodents should be on a pelleted diet made specifically for rodents. We recommend Oxbow Regal for rats and Oxbow Healthy Handfuls for hamsters, gerbils and mice. Diets with seeds and dried fruit should be avoided as they are high in fat and sugar and have little nutritional value. Small amounts of yogurt, fresh vegetables and fruit, uncooked pasta and unsweetened whole grain cereals may also be offered. However, sugary treats like Yogurt Drops should be avoided.

## **Housing**

Ideally, cages should have solid flooring (no wire grate) with a wire frame on top to ensure adequate ventilation. Aquariums should not be used! A solid floored exercise wheel is also recommended because legs can get caught in the bars of wire wheels.

## **Bedding**

We recommend soft paper based bedding like Carefresh Pet Bedding. Shredded paper is also fine to use. Wood shavings are not recommended because they are dusty, have a strong smell and have been known to cause respiratory problems in small animals.

## **Respiratory Disease**

Respiratory disease is very common in rats and mice. There are many organisms which cause respiratory disease, including: viruses, bacteria, and mycoplasma (an organism that almost all rats carry). Signs of respiratory disease include sneezing, "red tears" from the eyes and/or nose, increased respiratory rate and effort, and a blue tinge to feet, tail, and mucus membranes in the mouth. Some important things to remember are avoid contact with other rats/mice (which will decrease the chances of spreading contagious diseases), keeping the cage extremely clean and hygienic, reducing stress and supplying good nutrition for the animal.

## **Mammary Tumors**

Both female and male rats can develop mammary tumors. Tumors can occur anywhere from the neck to the inguinal region. The majority of mammary tumors in rats are benign growths but they can become locally extensive. These tumors can be removed surgically, preferably at earlier stages. Rats generally recover well but need to be monitored for pulling at sutures.