MICE, HAMSTERS, AND RATS  Mice, hamsters, and rats are rodents or gnawing animals, and have the same kind of strange, ever-growing front teeth as guinea pigs. Scientifically, there is no difference between a rat and a mouse, except size. A rat is a big mouse or, if you prefer, a mouse is a small rat. Pet mice are classified according to their color and markings. Pet rats are either white or a combination of white with other colors.

Mice are best housed in a large cage with a glass or wire front. Inside there should be one or two gadgets to help the mice exercise. These gadgets might include a ladder, a branch, and a treadmill. The animals' sleeping quarters should be lined with hay and shredded paper.

Are they easy to care for?

If they are given moistened bread or biscuits, they do not really need water separately. A wooden cotton reel hanging from a string will give mice something to gnaw.

In the wild, mice will eat almost anything, but pet mice need a little more care. Nevertheless they are easy and cheap to keep. They like plenty of oats and moist bread, and also enjoy seeds, wheat, and broken biscuits. To keep the cage clean, there should be a removable floor tray.

Mice have to eat almost continuously in order to survive.

How do you pick a mouse up?

Mice must be handled very carefully and gently. If you are rough, a mouse will never become a true pet, and may even bite. To pick up a mouse, catch it at the base of the tail with your thumb and forefinger. Then steadily lift it and put it in the palm of your other hand.