

What is rat tickling?

Rat tickling is a handling technique that was developed to study play and positive affect.

It mimics rat rough-and-tumble play by using a human hand to playfully “wrestle” a rat

Why tickle rats?

- Improves rat positive affect, handling, & welfare.
- Reduces handling time, stress, fear & anxiety.
- More effective than other techniques
- Social enrichment, especially for isolated rats

How to tickle a rat

Bring the home cage to a surface and remove hard enrichment items. Begin with your hand resting in the cage for a few seconds before starting the procedure below.



1. Dorsal Contact

- Use one hand
- Tickle on nape of the neck
- Light/brisk movements



2. Flip

- Lift/turn using your thumb and middle finger under the shoulders & flick your wrist
- Hold loosely, but firmly
- Don't kink the tail



3. Pin

- Hold rat down loosely
- Move fingers quickly & vigorously w/ light pressure
- 2-4 seconds per pin
- 4-5 pins for 15 seconds

WHAT NOT TO DO

- Be too hesitant/slow/gentle
- Be too rough
- Contact the rump, (aggression is directed here)



To see a video of tickling go to:
LabAnimalWelfare.com

Positive Responses

- Approach & follow your hand
- Light nibbling at the fingers
- Relaxed bodies and tails
- 50-kHz vocalizations (use a bat detector)

Negative Responses

- Avoidance & running away
- Defensive postures
- Tense bodies and tails
- 22-kHz vocalizations (use a bat detector)