



Rodent Handling and Restraint Techniques

Proper restraint is necessary for physical examination, blood collection, and compound administration in rodents. Rodents should never be restrained by the tip of the tail as this skin is fragile and may result in injury. The “3-finger” technique is a refinement to the traditional method of “scruffing” and decreases the chance of respiratory distress. Rodent restrainers sold by commercial dealers may be used as an alternative to scruffing and are necessary for some techniques.

Mouse Restraint (3-finger technique):

1. Lift the mouse out of the cage by grasping the mouse at the base of the tail (closest to the body).
2. Place the rodent on a textured surface to provide grip (restraint boards are available in each rodent housing room). While holding the tail, position the mouse so that it is facing away from you.
3. Use your non-dominant hand to grip the loose skin around the neck (scruff). Start by placing your thumb and middle finger on either side of the animal’s neck. Gather the skin by pulling and back in a “J” motion. When your middle finger and thumb are touching, slowly move your pointer finger starting at the top of the head, backwards towards your thumb. Replace your middle finger with your pointer finger. This motion should extend the head backwards.
4. Finally, tuck the tail under the fingers of your non-dominant hand and lift the mouse off the table
5. With proper restraint technique, the mouse should not be able to turn their head.



Rat Restraint (2-person technique):

1. Rats can be moved short distances by grasping the base of the tail. Rats can also be removed from their cage using a “baseball-grip” as described below.
2. Using a swift firm motion, place your thumb and ring finger under each of the rats’ forearms while your middle finger and pointer finger grab either side of the rat’s neck. This will give you control of the head. Use your second hand to grasp the tail and hind legs of the rat.
3. A second person will be needed to provide injections.



Hamster Restraint:

1. Hamsters will readily bite, especially if startled. Move slowly and use a small cup to move the animal when possible.
2. Hamsters do not have tails but can be restrained using the baseball grip (as in rats) or by grabbing the loose skin on the back of the neck (as in mice).

