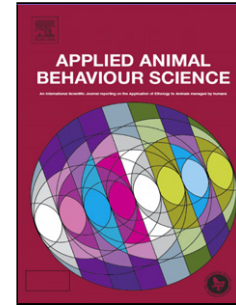


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A Happier Rat Pack: The Impacts of Tickling Pet Store Rats on Human-Animal Interactions and Rat Welfare

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Highlights

- Pet store rats were treated normally or tickled & divided into high- & low-callers.
- Tickling pet store rats improves ease of restraint by an unfamiliar handler.
- Low-calling tickled rats show more fear and anxiety in approach tests.
- Tickling pet store rats decreases inactivity and hiding behaviors.
- Results suggest tickling pet store rats may improve some human-animal interactions.

Abstract

Rats find initial interactions with humans frightening, which can lead to negative affect, and poor welfare. A handling technique called “tickling”, which mimics rat rough-and-tumble play, can be used to reduce these negative effects. When tickled, rats produce 50 kilohertz (kHz) ultrasonic vocalizations (USV)

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