

# I smell a rat enthusiast

At 4 years old, Daniel is as rough-and-tumble as children come. He's also so, so sweet and affectionate. And he loves animals.



Up until recently that love was mostly from afar, though last year he decided he wanted to catch a butterfly—[a goal he accomplished](#). A few months ago he touched a dog for the first time.



On our visit to some of our out-of-town cousins, Daniel was excited when he realized that they have three rats—successors to [my niece's two pet rats who died last summer](#).



“Can we open up the mouses?” he asked his 10-year-old cousin, the one who loves rats enough to persuade her parents to become rat owners.

I wasn't sure our little boy would be able to sit still enough to be near the rats.

But soon he was reaching out one finger.



And then he was asking for a chance to hold them.



He was so quiet and calm with them, stroking them sweetly and talking to them.



“What do you like about the rats?” I asked him.

“Because dem have so much hair and dem are so gentle,” he said.



His cousin assured him that the rats liked him, too. Salt and Cinnamon may have been a little uncertain of this stranger holding them, but Sugar was his new best friend.



When I told my rat-loving niece that I might write a blog about her beloved pets, she said to me, “I hope you’re going to change the rats’ names to protect their identities.” Then she laughed, so we’re assuming she was joking.



You won’t be surprised to hear that Daniel called his father at home last night and told him he wants a pet rat.

“No, he said. “I want 10.”

Let’s hope he’ll settle for 10 more visits to his cousins’ house instead.



*Dear readers, you can probably guess which one is Cinnamon. Bonus points to anyone who’s not my niece who can guess which is Salt and which is Sugar.*