

RIP Oreo

This post is a few weeks in the making – my daughter Sammie's favorite rat died on October 11. She took it pretty well; I was dreading having to tell her when she got off the bus that day. She got off the bus and promptly handed her younger brother and sister each a piece of her candy. 'Oh great', I'm thinking – she gets off the bus and immediately does something really nice for her siblings, and I have to tell her that her favorite rat died. But I didn't have to tell her – she asked me first if he had died. I said yes and asked her how she knew – turns out that big sis had taken it upon herself to tell Sammie on the way to the bus stop that morning. What are big sisters for? ☐ But like I said, Sammie was ok with it, but now that just leaves us one pet rat: Buckeye. We began with 2 rats, Bobby Jack and Oreo, and then we took in 2 more from a friend who was unprepared for pets, Mater and Buckeye – 4 rats at once was a bit much, but we didn't want to see them wind up as snake food, so that gave us 4 pet rats.

Bobby was the first to pass away in June of this year, followed by Mater in August, then Oreo in October – every 2 months we lose a rat, I guess. That's the only downside to these otherwise great pets – they only have a lifespan of 1-3 years. Otherwise, they are like mini dogs: affectionate as can be and very trainable. My girls love their rats and do very well at feeding them and giving them water every day, cleaning their cage, giving them baths, and taking them for walks. The rats would always seem depressed when my girls spend their week with Grandma in the summer, and they get really excited when the girls return. The only thing that keeps ME from getting too close to the rats is my allergy – what a bummer. I found out I am allergic to rats right after we got them as cute little babies. I would play with them and wonder why I broke out into hives on my forearms and sneezed like crazy and had itchy eyes for hours afterward. In a way,

it's a good thing, otherwise I would be more sad than the girls when they die, and at this rate, we are poised to have to say goodbye to a long line of pet rats!