

Commercial Cavy Keeping

Begin In A Small Way:
Increase Gradually
Advises C. V. B. TAYLOR

APRIL is a happy month, for breeders look around and see the fresh wild green food growing for their cavies. The youngsters jump about and seem to have that extra bit of liveliness, as much as to say, "Now for some fresh grass, dandelions, etc., instead of roots, which we are getting fed up with!"

At this season of the year also many new fanciers are anxious to commence cavy keeping. When I tell you that I get an average of a dozen letters a week seeking advice and information, readers will realise that there is plenty of activity in the guinea-pig world.

Some want a start just to keep one or two cavies as pets for the children. Not so long ago I saw a cavy in a pram as a passenger (with the baby) and quite tame too. On inquiry I found it was a pet in the home and had full freedom.

Others wish to start cavy keeping with a view to exhibiting, but I must admit that many who write to me are anxious to make a start in a fairly big way. Many are National Service young men who have now returned to civilian life, and no doubt, after the open-air life, are not content just to go back to "pen-pushing," etc., so are inquiring about cavy farming on a commercial basis with a view, in most cases, of meeting the needs of the waster trade only.

The breeding of cavies for research work will, no doubt, prove a profitable undertaking if worked on commonsense lines and not started in too hurried a manner, and if the owner understands animals, which is not always the case.

There are, however, several factors to be taken into consideration when large-scale cavy breeding is contemplated. First there is the question of accommodation, as overcrowding will not make for success. Then there is the cost of keeping the stock. If a fancier is able to grow his own root and vegetable crops it will be a big saving to the food bill.

Then again, one must take into consideration losses. Where a large number of cavies are kept together continually, on what is termed the colony system, my experience has been that losses have been larger than if sows have been placed in small separate hutches prior to kindling.

It may look very tempting on paper to read that by purchasing, say, fifty sows and rearing three litters a year from them, with an average of three to four per litter, the breeder can produce about 500 cavies per year. But try it out first by actual experience before assuming this is correct.

It boils down to this. Cavies, although quite hardy and easily managed, cannot be left to take their chance. The breeder must keep an eye on them.

The demand for cavies for research work fluctuates, and breeders do not, if they can help it, want to have large stocks of youngsters on hand "eating their heads off" when the outlet for them is not brisk. It is only fair to point out to these "snags" to those who intend to go in for waster breeding on a large scale.

This is my advice. Take up cavy keeping as an exhibition hobby, or for the love and interest of breeding the animals themselves, and look at the waster trade as a profitable but secondary aim.

Start with a few well-bred cavies of the chosen variety. Aim at breeding cavies for the show pen. As the youngsters come along, by careful selection proceed to build up your stud.

There are sure to be a certain percentage fit for wasters only. Others will be good breeding stock, either for the breeder himself or for sale to other fanciers; and a winning pig of any variety will find a ready sale for the price of a dozen or two wasters.

This three-fold policy of cavy keeping has, without the shadow of a doubt, many advantages over the breeding for research alone, although the latter can be made a good paying hobby. But the fullest pleasure and interest of cavy breeding belongs to the man who says, "I am out to breed a winner for Bradford championship show next year."

FOR THE BEGINNER IN SELF CAVIES

SELF cavy fanciers at this time of the year will be looking forward with interest to the arrival of those long-awaited litters with a hope that some of the youngsters will be good enough for the show pen. As soon as youngsters are born they should be given a good look over and any weaklings

destroyed. The main points which I look for when examining youngsters are width between eyes, width between ears, and size of eye. I leave colour for a while unless it is really bad, as I find this feature varies very much until the babies are 10 to 12 weeks old. One generally can tell then which have the best colour, and those that are likely to be fit for the show pen.

When exhibiting be sure that the cavy is in good condition. Good sweet meadow hay is a good conditioner. I always give the best of plain foods, but I never give water as the cavies get plenty of moisture from roots and greenfood.

Handle the youngsters often and groom regularly so that when they are on the judging table they will show off all the good points they possess. A cavy that runs all over is very annoying both to the judge and to the stewards.

Never lose heart if your cavy returns from a show cardless. Everyone suffers this reverse at some time or other. If this brief article is in any way helpful to those starting with self cavies I shall be pleased to enrol them as members of the English Self Cavy Club. Subscriptions are 5/- adults, 3/- juveniles.—Charles J. Wilson, 34, Dale St., Rawmarsh, near Rotherham.

AROUND THE CAVY CLUBS

SOUTH-WEST OF ENGLAND CAVY CLUB
Mr. C. Gale, Lancaster, Cornwall, and Messrs. Olds and Vincent, Redruth, Cornwall, have recently joined the South-West of England Cavy Club.

I shall be pleased to hear from any member who would like to guarantee a class at the club's young stock show. This will be the first club show held for many years and the committee is anxious to make it a success. Guaranteed prize money will be offered

NATIONAL MOUSE CLUB NOTES

By C. H. JOHNSON, Hon. Sec., "Highfield," Driffield, Yorks.

MOUSE SHOW CALENDAR

3 May, Calder Valley.
10 May, Hillingdon.
17 May, Airedale.

HEREWITH the present portion of Mr. Percy Ashley's article on the Mouse Fancy, past and present. On this occasion he deals with stock.

"There is not the slightest doubt that stock has progressed since the early days of the mouse fancy. In the intervening years there have been periods when mice have excelled in certain points and failed in others. At one time we had wonderful size, type and colour in P.E. Whites. They were, in fact, almost perfect. At another period Self Champagnes were hard to fault, and so it has gone on. First one breed and then another has had its ups and downs.

"How do the various breeds stand today? It is the purpose of this article to try to assess the present-day stock compared with the past, and point out if possible where it can be improved.

"Dealing first with Selfs, P.E. Whites have lost size and colour. In general they have lost ground. With Blacks there is a general improvement. Tan vents are not as prevalent and colour is good. Ears are a little better and other points have been maintained. There are not many Blues about nowadays, but what there are have generally improved, but have lost ground in colour. They are not solid enough and are inclined to be rusty.

"Reds and Chocolates are hardly shown these days. What Reds there are about are definitely behind those of pre-war days. Chocolates are inclined to be pale and carry white hairs. B.E. Silvers are hardly ever seen now, but P.E. Silvers are holding their own. Not much wrong with this variety.

"The colour of Creams is debatable. In my opinion, those shown at present are "off white" as women would say. More depth of colour is required—not buff or yellow. Devonshire cream is our standard, but unfortunately some of the younger generation have never seen cream. As regards type, present-day Creams have definitely improved.

"B.E. Whites are not receiving the support they should; there are only a few exhibitors. The variety has lost colour and type, and there has been a definite decline in quality. From 1927 to 1932, classes of around 14 B.E. Whites were common, and in 1929 a

and club funds are not to high, guarantors will be welcome.

Club specials will be offered at Penryn show on 2 June, and the Royal Cornwall (Judge P. Overton) on 11 and 12 June, at Redruth.—G. C. Tremer, 16, The Crescent, Bude, Cornwall.

NATIONAL AGOUTI CAVY CLUB

RESULT of the National Agouti Cavy Club's ballot for 1952 is: President (1), R. P. Woods 17, J. Dufton 14, W. Pipe 6, A. Hartley 5. Vice-presidents (2): J. Musgrave Sharp 13, R. P. Woods 13, A. Asquith 10, A. Gilbert 10, J. Dufton 8, W. Pipe 7, N. Stennett 6, A. Hartley 6, F. Overton 5, C. Ramsden 3. Chairman (1): A. Asquith 22, R. Tetlow 10, J. Mitchell 8. Committee (6): A. Asquith 23, J. Smith 22, Mrs. Hurrey 17, B. Waterhouse 16, R. Tetlow 16, J. Mitchell 15, E. Biddle 15, A. Bentley 14, R. J. Metcalf 14, C. Ramsden 15, J. Carter 14, J. Fawcett 13, A. Smith 9, H. Hinchcliffe 8, A. Ackroyd 8, W. M. Simpson 5. Club Judges (10): J. Dufton 23, A. Gilbert 22, R. P. Woods 21, W. Pipe 21, H. Trigger 18, J. Smith 18, Miss Radeaglia 15, N. Stennett 14, A. Hartley 14, A. Asquith 14, R. J. Metcalf 13, C. Naylor 11, J. M. Sharpe 11, E. Turner 10, T. Robinson 10, F. Overton 9, A. H. Bragill 7, N. Orange 7, W. Vickers 7, C. Ramsden 6, R. Tetlow 7, H. Hinchcliffe 6, J. Radcliffe 3, G. R. Lodge 30. Judge for young stock show, Batley, J. Dufton. Judge for adult stock show, A. Gilbert. Auditor: Frank Overton. Scrutineer: Harry Craven. Hon. Sec.: G. R. Lodge, 50, Pontefract Road, Ferrybridge, Yorks. Papers returned, 42.—Harry Craven, scrutineer.

Obituary

W. JOHNSTON

WITH regret I inform all English rabbit fanciers of the death, on 4 April, of Willie Johnston, of Wishaw, partner of Johnston and Stewart.

The late Mr. Johnston was highly respected by all fanciers, and a great friend of the late Tom Millar. He was also a life member of the National English R.C. and the Scottish Rabbit Club, and was a committee member of both clubs for many years.

He possessed a happy disposition and a keen sense of humour, and will be greatly missed. The funeral took place at Cambusnethen Cemetery on 6 April, and the Fancy was represented by his partner, Tom Stewart, Messrs. Matt. Bendelow and Son, Mr. Charlie Robertson, Mr. Bob Wallace, and myself. All fanciers will join in extending deepest sympathy to his widow and family.

ROBT. M. ALLARDICE.

black and white hairs. Remember the standard says, "evenly splashed over and under body." A good even only crops up now and again. With the variety we are "where we came in."

"Concluding with the A.O.V. section, Agoutis have maintained their general standard. Could do with a little more fire in coat. There are some good Cinnamons about. With Cinnamons we have two lines of thought for if fiery we do not get the chocolate ticking with the same effect as if the colour is dull. If, therefore, we are not careful, we lose sparkle.

"Sables have always come in fits and starts. I do not think there are any specialist breeders at present, but generally speaking the variety is as good as ever.

"Silver Greys are at present coming into fashion again, but they are not quite as good as they were. They lack top lustre. The silvering should be like needle points.

"Only a few Silver Fawns about, all short of silvering. This also applies to Browns.

"Chinchillas have made progress. A good many mice of quality are about. The top has improved, hairs are more evenly tipped with black and show more sparkle.

"Silver Foxes have made great strides since their inception in 1936. Breeders must concentrate on top colour and they will then be almost perfect. Pearls, Argencies and Astres are almost extinct on the show bench. What few I have seen have lost on all points."

A summary on Mr. Percy Ashley's article will appear in next week's issue of FUR AND FEATHER. At the same time I will give the position of the cash points competition to date and other news of current interest including a short review on the Fallsworth show where the 1,000 entry mark was topped. We congratulate Mr. Ashley on this achievement.—C. H. JOHNSON, hon. secretary

Show Promoter's Thanks

I THANK all the exhibitors who made it possible for us to stage such a grand lot of mice at Manchester on 5 April. There was a total entry of 1,044. This is the third show in succession at Manchester to have over 1,000 entries.

Thanks also to all the judges, to Mr. Jessop, the secretary, to Mr. A. Day and Mr. J. Ryan, who took over the books during judging to Mr. J. Watts, show manager, and also Mr. C. H. Johnson, N.M.C. sec.

All stock was on rail by 6.30 p.m.

For the benefit of all show promoters it can go on record that the experiment of charging half entry fees for duplicate classes was a huge success. There were classes (duplicate) of between 60 and 78. Exhibitors in the rabbit section on the same day were amazed at the large duplicate classes.—PERCY ASHLEY, show promoter.

NATIONAL RABBIT AND CAVY ASSOCIATION

SUBSCRIPTIONS are the main source of any club's finances. There are no good fairies just round the corner ready to make up any club's deficiencies, and all fanciers should make it a point of honour to pay subscriptions as soon as they become due. There are several members of the National Fancy Rabbit and Cavy Association who have not paid their subscriptions, although they have been reminded of the fact. This sort of thing puts much unnecessary work on the secretaries.

Unstinted praise is due to those big-hearted well-known Midland judges and fanciers, Mr. Reg. Farmer and Mr. F. Greathurst for their untiring efforts on behalf of the N.F.R.C.A. They are great assets to the association. In the south we have fanciers who work jolly hard to assist the progress of the N.F.R.C.A., but, unfortunately, there are not enough of them.

Once more I appeal to all clubs to become affiliated to the National Fancy Rabbit and Cavy Association. It only costs 5/- per annum. Specials galore then become yours just for the asking.

While on the subject of affiliation I must again impress upon club secretaries that specials cannot be granted by the N.F.R.C.A. unless a club is affiliated. Another point which I must bring to the notice of club secretaries is that it is of the utmost importance when a show has been granted specials, that results are sent to the N.F.R.C.A. secretaries immediately after the show.

There has been some little delay in sending out some specials to winners. This has been entirely due to delay by printers. Rest assured they will all be sent out as soon as possible.

Like a giant monster whose appetite is never satisfied, so it is with the joint secretaries of the N.F.R.C.A. Their appetite has only just been whetted as regards the number of members. They want more and more fanciers to join—must reach the thousand mark this year, I am constantly informed. So what about it fanciers? Write to Mr. and Mrs. Dargue, 7, Kingston Road, Romford, Essex, they will be pleased to tell you all about the association. When you do write please send a stamped addressed envelope. It will help considerably. N.F.R.C.A. badges can be had from the secretaries at 2/6 each.

Clubs affiliated to the N.F.R.C.A. now number 92.—A. Matthews.