

CAVY COMMENTARY

WILL-O'-THE-WISP BREEDING LEADS TO NOWHERE

THIS week I would like to take a different line in my notes. From all parts of Great Britain I have received letters from cavy fanciers in response to the notes I have written the last few months. Not all of them agree with all I have said, but almost every writer has thanked me for trying to help the novice, interest the old hand, and, at the same time, give the cavy Fancy as a whole a lift on the way to greater successes.

Case-hardened critic though I am said to be, I readily admit that the many letters I have received have done much to encourage me to continue writing, and I here want to thank the writers of all those letters—those who praised and those who blamed—all are helpful, for their words of encouragement and help. They have helped me in many ways. Most of the subjects on which I have touched have been suggested in one letter or another, often unintentionally on the part of the writer, and I have tried to deal with them fairly and educationally. In this way my correspondents have helped me to help others and if we would only continue on those lines, with a desire to help uppermost in our minds and hearts, we could accomplish great things.

One of the letters I have in mind came from that old fancier, Mr. J. H. Harrison, of Leicester. How long we have known each other I would not like to say, but our friendship goes back a long, long way. In his letter Mr. Harrison asks me to go on writing my notes, saying that, though some who write to the paper will try to create a jarring note, there is usually something I write that is helpful to the novice and interesting to the old hand. Mr. Harrison has been breeding and exhibiting cavies for 47 years, having exhibited all varieties except Himalayans, though we always most closely associate his name with the Self Red, with which variety he secured his first win 46 years ago, at Thorne show. In all those years, Mr. Harrison tells me, he has only once introduced fresh blood into his stud, and the experiment was a failure, so he has stuck to his one line of breeding ever since. I mention this as a lesson to those young fanciers who, like the will o' the wisp, flit from one stud to another buying a boar here and a sow there, yet wondering why they never make progress. Concentration, both in thought and on the material one has in the stud, is the surest way to lasting success.

Another letter is from an old friend whose communications always give me a feeling of inferiority. His letters are full of cheerfulness, and display a lively interest in the cavy Fancy and its followers. Twenty years ago he was an active cavy breeder and exhibitor, winning many prizes at good shows, including Bradford Champion show, and well known to a wide circle of friends. For a long time now, he has been a great sufferer from the effects of injuries sustained in the 1914-18 war. For years he has been obliged to spend his time lying on his back in bed, his days of pain being more frequent than his days of freedom from it. On the former days he is even unable to write or read, yet it is amazing how he keeps up his spirits. In his letters he often mentions fanciers he met in the old days. He keeps himself well posted as to the changes that take place in the Fancy, and offers me opinions on the many questions I raise from time to time in these columns.

His happiest memories are connected with the cavy Fancy, and those memories, he tells me, do much to help him keep up heart when everything seems to be against him. How he keeps up his spirits I cannot imagine, but he does. Read what he said in a recent letter:

"Just a line to thank you for sending **FUR AND FEATHER** every week. I thoroughly enjoy every word you have written, the articles being interesting, educational, and very enjoyable. I particularly liked the one describing the meeting of fanciers in your caviary. I still miss my cavies but I never envy other fanciers the pleasure they get from their hobby."

At present he is spending a few weeks in his native village in Staffordshire, having got there through the kindness of the British Legion. He had to travel by train in his invalid carriage as walking is altogether out of the question, yet this is what he said in one letter—

"God has been very good to me and I have a lot to be thankful for, especially for friendship made through the Fancy."

Arthur Swinger, for that is the name of the man I count it a privilege to call friend, can give us all a lesson in patience and forbearance. When his holiday is ended he will return to Worthing, where his address will be, as before, Ward 1, Gifford House, Boundary Road, Worthing. If any cavy fancier feels that he is in need of a little encouragement when the outlook is not so bright as he would like, let him drop a line to Arthur Swinger. The writing of the letter, which should be on cavy matters, will of itself help to clear the clouds, but the reply, which will come when my friend is fit to write, will be a ray of sunshine.

I have, at different times, had letters in similar vein from other fanciers whom fortune has not dealt so kindly with as it has the majority of us. Whenever I receive such a letter I feel deeply thankful that I have been privileged to be one of the great fraternity of livestock lovers and to help in the small way I have been able in building up a still stronger brotherhood of fanciers.

The Fancy is a great source of happiness to thousands of men and women in all parts of this land of ours, and there are countless homes that are the better for the head of the house taking an active part in the great hobby of breeding small livestock with the object of improving the particular species in which his interest most closely lies. This is a side of the Fancy that we do not, I am afraid, push so much as we might do. A

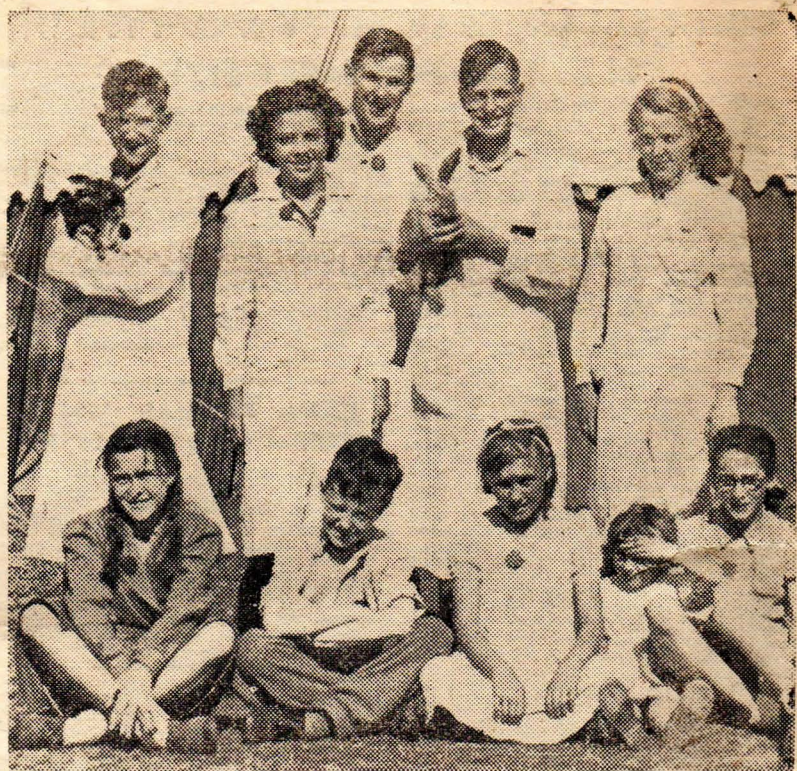
good fancier is invariably a good husband, a good father, and a good citizen.

Its queer how keen fanciers can be to each other in producing good quality animals and "whacking" the other fellow in the show pen, yet at all times ready to lend a helping hand to those who need it. The good fancier, too, is ever ready to give credit to others for achievements deserving it, and, when he is beaten, to offer sincere congratulations to the man who does it. He does not count the winning of prizes as the beginning and end of a fancier's career. He likes to win, naturally, but he likes to see the best animal head the class, irrespective of ownership, scorning to take mean advantage of his fellows.

If this true fancier spirit was not so much in evidence we should have a far poorer Fancy than we have to-day. Where would be all the splendid shows we have each year if it were not for the great work done by voluntary workers, secretaries, stewards, and others, who are actuated by the one motive of helping the Fancy and, through it, their fellow-fanciers? Can anyone name any other section of our national life wherein there is so much so freely given with a little hope or expectation of financial reward. Mere £ s. d. never repays the true fancier for the work he does in the Fancy. His reward is in seeing the Fancy prosper and made a better means of recreation and pleasure for others.

This Fancy of ours has been built up by the voluntary effort by thousands of just ordinary people like ourselves, the secret of their success being that they put the Fancy first and self last. Their efforts have created a great and glorious heritage for those who have followed, and who will follow them, and it should be the pleasure, as well as the duty, of every fancier to see that nothing he does shall in any way prevent that heritage being handed on to future generations of fanciers in an even grander state. If we all took up that attitude we should hear less of bickerings over club management, competitions at shows would be keener and fiercer than ever, and men and women would value being known as a true fancier more highly than anything else.

ALLAN WATSON.



Here are Junior Members at the Erith and Belvedere Rabbit Club Show on August 3rd and 4th. These enthusiastic youngsters ran their own section and secured 94 entries. Master Clarke is the secretary of the Junior Section, Best Jun.or Exhibit was won by eight years old Alan Edwards, one of the keenest fanciers in the club.

DURHAM & NORTHUMBERLAND CAVY CLUB
THERE will be a meeting of the Durham and Northumberland Cavy Club at Newcastle on Aug. 23rd, in the show field of

Northumberland County show. Any member who has anything to put forward for the good of the club should bring it to this meeting. Subs. are now overdue. The young stock show will be held at Bishop Middleham on Aug. 30th.—W. T. Dinning, hon. sec., 39, Albert Road, Consett, Durham.

NATIONAL MOUSE CLUB NOTES AND NEWS

"TELLING THE WORLD" ABOUT MICE

Ron. Beard's Great Work at Stroud

By Dick Ward, 57, Chantrey Rd., Sheffield 8.

Aug. 22nd.—Blackpool.
Aug. 23rd.—Hatfield.

I APPEAL for support for Hatfield show on Aug. 23rd. There will be 20 classes for mice, and Mr. P. C. Horton will judge. Mr. Tom Bamford will act as chief steward and has also promised a special of 5/- for the best mouse. Schedules may be had from Mrs. I. Bishop, "Highdene," Great North Road, North Myms, nr. Hatfield, Herts.

Mr. Horton is very anxious that this effort should be a success as it will be breaking new ground for the N.M.C. It is very near to Blackpool, but even so I hope members will scrape up some entries.

A few weeks ago when I appealed for support for Stroud show, I passed the remark that if these smaller shows were the result of one new fancier joining our ranks they were well worth while. Mr. Tanner, the sec. of Stroud show, writes:—

"I am not a mouse fancier, but I am that new member. If Archie Blackmore and the small band of sportsmen who came to Stroud show on Saturday are typical of N.M.C. members then indeed I shall be proud to be associated with them. The entry was only small, but the interest taken in the mice more than made up for that."

Archie Blackmore has sent me a most interesting letter on the same show, which I should like to give in full. I think it conveys the atmosphere of a show admirably. He writes:—

"Just a few lines about Stroud show on July 26th. The N.M.C. special winners were: Best adult and B.I.S., J. W. Stephenson; P.E. FAWN, best 8 weeks, Ellis and Son, black Dutch, well balanced.

"Entries were 100 and quality was good, but the stock found the heat a bit too much. Full prize money was paid on a class with two entries; that good old-timer, 'Joe' Holder, stood the bill.

"Mice had never previously been shown at Stroud and they were the centre of attraction; there were crowds round classes all the time, and questions were asked by college professors and humble schoolboys. Ron. Beard was in his element lecturing to the crowd.

"Jim Ellis and I went out to have a look at the general show which was also good. We came back and Ron. was still lecturing. He would put some M.P.s to shame. It would be a good idea in future to have a small leaflet printed for agricultural shows, setting out details of the club and its aims with a few words on the Long-tail and its uses in research.

"I heard many inquiries for stock at Stroud. People saw a variety they liked and immediately wanted to buy some mice. If breeders have good breeding stock there is a market for them

"It was a hot and tired party that arrived back at Bristol, but all had enjoyed the trip to Stroud." ARCHIE BLACKMORE.

I already have some leaflets for shows, and if any show secretary would like some to

distribute among interested spectators I should be happy to send them to him.

Mr. C. H. Johnson at Driffeld had the marquee well supplied with posters and details of where to apply for information. In fact I don't think I have ever seen a show better displayed. I am sure that like the good sport he is he would be glad to loan some of these posters to any interested secretary provided they were looked after and returned.

I apologise to members for any delay in correspondence, due to my being on holiday. I nearly had a heart attack when I saw the pile of letters awaiting my return, so if I seem a little long in replying, please forgive me; I will do my best, but even a secretary's wife likes to be taken to the pictures now and again.

I add my appeal to that of Mr. Walter Coles for fanciers to keep an eye open for any abnormalities in their stock, especially in the hind feet. They will be of very great interest to the Institute of Genetics at Cambridge, and may easily be the means of helping to alleviate human suffering. Mr. T. C. Carter, who is in charge of the experiments there is a member of the N.M.C. He told me that he had received so many kindnesses from fanciers that he thought the least he could do was to join the club.

RAILWAYS TO CUT OUT HAMSTER DELAYS

Forthcoming B.H.C. Shows
Hatfield—Aug. 23rd.
Summer Cup Show—Aug. 30th.
Halifax, Sept. 20th.
Dover—Oct. 28th.
Kelvin Hall, Nov. 13th.
National—Nov. 21st.

ON July 19th Hamster fanciers had one of the best opportunities of propaganda they will ever have, but they failed to make use of it. Thanks to an unofficial show supported by guarantees and entries by a few Hamster Club members, the entries were split, and the secretary of the North Kent F.F.S. was left wondering by the magnificent total of 57 entries from eight exhibitors, Messrs. White, Baldwin, Birch, Morgan, Oldfield, Battersby, Reynolds and Cowell.

It has been argued that rabbit clubs have dates that clash and consequently split entries. Every fancier knows that this is a problem that forms one of the greatest headaches in the rabbit Fancy, and one which rabbit fanciers are eternally trying to solve.

What some members do not seem to realise is that there is a certain etiquette in the Fancy in arranging shows, and unless the secretary be first contacted, dates are bound to clash. I don't mind how many shows I arrange, but if more shows mean split entries and smaller support than you can count me out. I'm here to praise the Hamster, not to bury him, and if there is a quicker way to kill the Hamster as a benchable animal then I've yet to discover it.

Had the entries been impressive enough at Welling to convince the officials, Vic. Tate,

who as sec. of the S.E. Smallstock Assoc., has a pretty widespread influence in that section, could, and would, have taken up the cudgels of the Hamster's behalf. As it was, a grand opportunity to help the club and the Fancy was lost.

I have been blamed for not giving publicity to Bollington—that doesn't worry me. I should have been blamed if I had, and rightly so. The present standard does need revision badly. Everybody knows that, but until the Council has revised it the B.H.C. recognised shows will be run according to that standard. They will not be arranged to suit a handful of members whose ideas are not accepted by either the Council or the complete membership.

The railway companies have been hearing a lot from me recently, and I am now assured that steps will definitely be taken to cut out delays if members suffer delay or damage they should either ask their station master to take up the matter, or better still write to the commercial superintendent, cartage section, of the railway at fault.

Recent entries make me feel pretty hopeless but I ask members to support the club show at West Bromwich. This, held in conjunction with the horticultural society's show, will bring the Hamster before a new section of the public. If accommodation is wanted the three hotels are "Lewisham," "Star and Garter," and "Beechwood," all in High St. I acknowledge with appreciation the following specials: Mr and Mrs. Everist 10/- (Kelvin Hall and National); Mr. S. Dibben 5/-; Rev. B. G. M. Alexander 5/- (Kelvin Hall); W. J. 10/- (Kelvin Hall). JEAN E. COOK, Duke's Hill, Wokingham, Surrey.