

NATIONAL MOUSE CLUB NOTES AND NEWS

OUTCROSSING IS A TRICKY BUSINESS

By R. Ward, 57, Chantrey Road, Sheffield, 8.

MRS. BLOWERS'S recent remarks about the number of bucks she has lost have brought me an interesting letter from Harry Booth. Harry tells me he has lost a lot of stock and his experience bears out Mrs. Blowers, as he has lost many more bucks than does, though not as many as she has. On some occasions, he has had to dig through drifts up to 6 ft. deep to feed his stock. Any fancier who has managed to get through this period without losing stock has been very lucky. Where stock has managed to survive, their condition has been very poor. With a return of better weather let us hope that stock will soon pick up.

One point which has been made and emphasised by Mr. Horton recently refers to outcrosses.

This business of outcrossing is not as simple as it seems, and it contains many pitfalls for the beginner. The best advice I can give to the novice is to get used to keeping his stock in good condition. Carry on breeding and don't use an outcross except on the advice of an experienced fancier of the breed you are keeping. Any outcrossing is done for a definite object and not simply for the sake of it. If your stock is healthy and vigorous and is breeding a fair proportion of youngsters approaching the standard, your best bet is selection and again selection.

One faulty outcross may undo the careful breeding of years. When you get a trio from a reputable breeder you are getting the fruit of his experience. Give them a chance to show what they can produce.

Mr. J. Houghton has taken over the secretaryship of Chorley F.S., which intends to include mouse classes at its afternoon shows on the second Saturday of each month.

For the last few months I have been breeding a few *Astrex* mice. They don't seem somehow to take on with the average run of fancier. I suppose for one thing they have the appearance of being out of condition. If only the wave could be kept in the coat in the adult mice as it appears in the babies they would be lovely. A local fancier looked at a litter about 14 days old and was most impressed. Talk about a permanent wave, but unfortunately it is not permanent; as they grow older the wave grows out.

Our old friend, Mr. Partington, sends me a few notes, which will, I know, be read with interest. He writes:

"It is over thirty years since I started my test breeding, and most fanciers who had stock from my stud of Reds a few years ago commented on the rich even red colour of my mice."

"These Reds did not carry any tan pattern. My first mating was wild field mouse to P.E. White. I had several white does mated to wild bucks, and some of the young, all wild greys, were kept. Some were mated back to the wild again, others were mated to the Whites, and the litters from these were mated together. Then the many different colours came in the litters—blacks, blues, chocolates, agoutis, B.E. fawns and whites."

"The fawns and chocolates were run together and a great change came in the first litters. Reds of a sort appeared so I kept on with these two. Chocolate and black were next run together, and a great improvement was seen. The agoutis and chocolate together produced a rust colour and pale chocolate, with real golden agoutis. Several does of these colours were run with red bucks of a sort; these were the litters that interested me. Reds I was waiting for were there. Some black bred chocolate does were mated to the red bucks and my real stud of Reds was built up in this way."

"I am trying to get reds back again to something near to the reds of years ago."

"I advise beginners to get good stock and not to entertain cheap stock; it's a waste of time. Join the N.M.C. and Mr. Ward will no doubt put you in touch with good fanciers who are willing to adopt a novice and give of their best information."—J. Partington.

I was a bit disappointed at the lack of response to "Fern End's" thought-provoking

article on the financial side of shows. Mr. Chapman, Cardiff, sends me a few notes which he tells me were written before "Fern End's" article appeared. Mr. Chapman writes:

"While mouse exhibitors moan that they are the Cinderellas of the small live-stock fancy, and feel that on winning red cards they should not be out of pocket, surely they could alter things themselves by making entrance fees 2/-, because prize money must come from entrance fees."

"At present mouse classes are not worth the candle to show secretaries except in certain areas, but at the same entrance fee as rabbits, with no pens to provide and little space taken at the show hall, they would soon prove a useful addition to the annuals."

"Fanciers, if the Mouse Fancy is at present a 'tanner hop' you've made it so, and only you can put things on a worthy footing."

"I hope you will double your entrance fee and so double the number of shows with mouse classes on the schedule."

An Introduction to Mouse Genetics

By R. S. HUTCHINGS

(Continued from our February 7th issue)

I WANT to try to outline the genetical relationship of the Self colours standardised in the Fancy. From the factors we have mentioned already it may be remembered that two distinct kinds of self have appeared: Self Red and Self Black. Both these are known to the Fancy as Selves, and standardised as such, but the reader who has had the patience to follow me so far will realise that they owe their "selfness" to two distinct genes in the same series. Self Red to the yellow gene designated AY, which is dominant to Agouti, and Self Black to the Self factor designated a, which is recessive to Agouti. This distinction is important to be grasped before we proceed, because all the self colours standardised by the National Mouse Club are related to one or other of these two basic forms of selfness.

The factor a, which we have, until now, for convenience referred to as Self Black should strictly speaking be considered as denoting a self pattern rather than any particular self colour, since its effect is Self Black only in the absence of other colour factors. Similarly, other Selves, except for those related to the yellow factor, all require the presence of this factor a in order to be self in pattern instead of agouti or tan pattern. The colour factors which account for the various self colours in the presence of this self factor are blue dilution, designated d; chocolate designated b, and pink-eye dilution, designated p. Each of these factors is recessive to its alternative non-mutant form, and so in each of the combinations we shall be analysing, the recessive factor has to be present in a double dose, inherited from both parents, for its effect to be visible.

The Self Blue of the Fancy is simply a self (aa) which inherits the blue factor d from each parent, so we get the combination aadd. Self Chocolates are similarly aabb, while selfs carrying both blue and chocolate (aabbdd) give the unstandardised self lilac, so called from its similar constitution to the rabbit breed, though, unfortunately, not so attractive in shade, due to the lack of pinky tinge in the mouse combination.

As both blue and chocolate differ from black by only one colour factor, either of them crossed with Self Black produces a first generation all black but all carrying the recessive. Self Black produces a first generation all black but all carrying the recessive. Self Black mated to Self Blue, for example, gives Self Black of constitution aadd, which when mated brother to sister (or in unrelated pairs bred the same way) would produce blacks and blues in an average three to one proportion, one of the blacks being true-breeding, the other two carrying one gene for blue. If it is necessary to find out which blacks carry blue it can be tested very simply by a mating

to blue, the progeny of which would indicate true black with an all black litter, whereas the black-carrying-blue would give an expectation of 50 per cent. blues. Exactly the same relationship exists between black and chocolate, and testing after an out cross can be carried out in the same way.

The pink eye factor in combination with chocolate produces Self Champagne; in combination with blue, P.E. Self Silver; whilst with black the result is Dove. I can't make any claims for the genetical constitution of the elusive B.E. Silver because I have never bred or tested any and I have yet to read or hear any convincing evidence on the matter.

In the presence of the agouti factor A in place of self a, the effect of blue is to dilute both the black and red constituents of the agouti make-up, resulting in a washed out agouti effect which may or may not be capable of being selectively bred to reproduce the apparently extinct Blue Agouti. Chocolate with agouti provides the Cinnamon, which, therefore, behaves in relation with Agouti exactly as I have indicated above for Self Black and Self Chocolate. Pink eye with agouti again provides a washed out and, of course, pink eyed edition of the Agouti of no interest to the Fancy.

The remaining standardised Self varieties, Self Fawn (P.E.) and Self Creams (both P.E. and B.E.) are both related to the Self Red, and therefore carry a single dose of yellow factor, in combination with a single dose of agouti, tan, or self. Self Fawns are reds carrying the pink-eye dilution factor, and many Fancy strains also carry the chocolate factor, which Dr. Kerr states has a purifying action on the yellow factor. B.E. Creams are reds carrying both blue and chocolate factors, and P.E. Creams carry the pink eye factor in addition. In all these varieties the yellow factor Ay, which it will be remembered, can only be inherited from one parent, is usually combined with the self factor a in the combination Aya, but it is difficult or impossible to distinguish whether Agouti, Tan or Self is carried by yellow, and at least some Fawns and Creams of the Fancy carry agouti or tan in place of self.

Any of the self varieties related to black (based on the aa combinations), are converted into their equivalent tan varieties simply by the substitution of the tan factor, which we have already met as a factor in the agouti series for the self factor, to which it is dominant. Any tan variety crossed with its corresponding Self provides a first generation of tan all carrying self, which mated together give an expectation of three tans (two of them carrying self) and one self, as we have previously explained in connection with the black/blue and black/chocolate crosses.

Exhibiting

By JACK WORMALD

WHEN beginners have bred some good mice they will naturally want to have a go on the show bench, and the first requirements are Maxey show cages and a travelling box.

FUR AND FEATHER advertises forthcoming shows, and entries should be sent in good time.

Let us assume two adult Black and Tans and two Black and Tans under 8 weeks are being exhibited and that the class numbers are 10 and 11. The entry should read:

2 exhibits in class 10, Black and Tan Adult, 2 exhibits in class 11, Black and Tan 8 wks.

4 entries at 1/- P.O. for 4/- enclosed. If it is desired to duplicate the mice in any other class "also in class —" should be written on the same line as the original entry. The show sec will send a travelling label which should be put on the outside of the travelling box and on which the name and address of the exhibitor should be written. An exhibitor also receives a label for each mouse entered, on which the class and pen No. are written. This should be attached to the Maxey cage underneath the lid. Next, and this is very important, a card should be put inside lid of travelling box, giving a list of classes and the pen numbers in which the mice are being exhibited. A specimen card might read: This box contains in four cages: class 10 pen 1, class 10 pen 2, class 11 pen 5, class 11 pen 6. If this is not done the steward

will have to ask the secretary for the pen numbers before he can pack and return them.

Many exhibitors make their own travelling boxes, but it should be remembered that a home-made box must be so constructed that the Maxey cages fit easily into the box. Last summer one exhibitor actually drew a plan on the lid showing the only way the Maxey's could be packed. The first time I saw it, I tried to see the funny side, but, after struggling to pack it several times, the situation lost much of its humour.

Exhibitors who tie their boxes with string are lucky to get them and the contents back intact.

The wire fronts of the Maxey cages should be free from rust, and paint will overcome this trouble. Many a good mouse has been handicapped by a dirty nose.

A wire, or clip on the right-hand side of the Maxey lid, in which prize cards can be firmly fixed, is a help, as without it prize cards are often lost. The show cage should be loosely packed with hay, and the mice should be provided with at least three days' supply of food.

It is easy to be a good winner, but it is just as important to be a good loser.

I have received several letters from novice fanciers, and I will be happy to help anyone else if a stamped envelope is enclosed.—J. WORMALD, "Highborn," Scarborough Road, Driffield, East Yorkshire.

HOW TO PRODUCE THIRTY POUNDS OF FAT.

(Continued from page 122)

say this in no sarcastic spirit. Though I have reason to believe that the task is much more difficult than Mr. Bridge imagines, I would be the last to say it is impossible to a man with confidence, and the ability to stick to that confidence through years of difficulties and setbacks which inevitably arise.

We who have stuck to the task of improving the dark steel Flemish have seen our efforts well rewarded during the past year—plenty of bucks scaling upwards of 13 lb. and does over 14 lb have been exhibited, and many promising youngsters are coming along. I look forward to the time when there will be no rabbits eligible for the intermediate class, and wish good luck to all who are working to that end. STUART WALKER.

PIGEONS AND PIGEON WORLD

(Continued from page 127)

a pair or two, and then every encouragement must be given to get them to exhibit. The next step is to give them some encouragement before they can reach the upper rungs of the ladder, and with this in view I put forward the following suggestion in the hope that other fanciers may be able to improve upon it.

Each exhibitor should pay, say, 3d. or 6d. on each entry, in addition to the stipulated entry fee, to form a pool, and the total amount received be paid to best 1st prize-winner, best 2nd, best 3rd, best res., best vhc, best hc, and best c in the show—one-seventh of the total to each. This is primarily for small shows. At the larger shows the classes could be divided into sections. W. NEWCOMBE.

IN BRIEF

THE innumerable fancier friends of Mr. Arthur Wells, Brighton, the noted L.F. Tumbler breeder, will learn with regret that he is seriously ill. All will join us in wishing him a speedy recovery. We know of no one more popular than the genial Arthur. He is patron of the Middlesex Columbarian Society, member of the Board of Directors of Fancy Press Limited, and a member of the Management Committee of the National Pigeon Association. He is, indeed, one of the personalities of our Fancy.

A committee meeting of the Yorkshire Columbarian Society will be held at the Queen's Hotel, Bradford, on April 2nd, at 7.15 p.m. Suggestions should be sent to Mr. J. W. Walker, hon. sec., 21, Rowlands Avenue, Dalton, Huddersfield.

We learn with sorrow of the death of E. Sampson, the well-known Jacobin fancier, of Chagford, Devon. To his family we express, on behalf of the whole Fancy, our sincere condolences.

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