

by any means, but there was a fine array and keen competition in the eight classes so generously allowed.

It is time that Smerle fanciers dispelled, once and for all, the jibe of certain judges that we specialise in '57 varieties, and if I helped just a little at Timken I am satisfied. I get a bit hot under the collar when I read in judges' show reports the comment that such and such a bird is 'too big', and then forthwith the judges award it a red card and, perhaps, go on to give it best in show. It is more than this; it is sheer hypocrisy. Have they never read the standard, where it clearly states that the size of a Smerle is that of a Show Racer? Who can help us in the rightful task of correcting the image of the breed if not the judges?

I had a rough idea about the size of a Show Racer when I went to Timken, and I tried faithfully to fulfil what I had to do. Big birds, perhaps big winners too, were pegged back, and if one or two came into the money it was because of the inferiority to a marked degree of those which remained in the class. Too many of these giants crouch for my liking; perhaps through outcrossing they are under-flighted; and once or twice I detected their true pedigree through failure of eye colour, which should be bull and mulberry in shade.

The British Antwerp Smerle Club has lost several good fanciers who long for the breed to get back to the standard as it should be. I hope that after Timken other waverers' threats to follow them will be halted. A stand has to be made sometime.

I had no hesitation in picking my best exhibit—Mr Gordon Austin's young cream cock, which stood as erect as a guardsman with the eye always over the ball of the foot. The last Smerle of almost equal merit (apart from Sandene Supreme) that I saw was a blue from the same loft, when I judged the club show, and which I understand got away from the loft. The cream, one of the very few about these days—has the colour lost its attractiveness?—that combines symmetry with type in profile, body structure and carriage. To me it fitted together like a jig-saw. The colour was right, so was the face filling, cut-away, frill, fighting and beak. There was not an atom of coarseness anywhere. Congratulations to its fortunate owner. I am sure that an old friend, Len Wolfe, would have approved. How we miss him.

The other bird I had to pick for competition in the final selection for the trophies was Mr John Sears's young dun chequer hen which is longer in feather but a first class pigeon in every respect. It has a good range of skull with a well filled-in frontpiece. Some birds have noses which exaggerate their power; this one did not, and I admired it very much.

What did make my day, and perhaps proves my previous point about opportunities at shows such as Timken, was the joy, after the catalogues were available, of knowing that having been conscious of handling only two of the birds in my section before, I had awarded prizes to three new names in the Smerle Fancy, and I had the privilege of meeting two of them at the show. It was certainly a feather in their caps.

ANTWERP SMERLE SELF or CHEQUER Ad cock 11: 1 Eldson, a welcome back to the club John, for your strawberry, well made pigeon, good skull and size, shown in the peak of condition 2 6 Sears, the smallest of three blacks in this class, a well known winner, I understand, plenty large enough for me but not nearly as good a type as the winner 3 Gynn, a lovely yellow which would certainly have gone up one but for moult, very similar to the winner 4 Austin 5 Ennals 7 Bagley (empty Nobbs) Ad hen 8: 1 Hutchinson, dun chequer, well worth owning, splendidly put down 2 3 Nobbs, dainty red leading, about the smallest bird on show, lovely arched profile 3 dun chequer, showing a bit of gullet, but type well maintained 4 5 Sears 6 Bagley (empty Ennals, Denton) Cock 1968 8: Not a good class. 1 Gynn, won easily with a lavender chequer, powerful without being coarse, I liked 2 3 Sears, black, colour not dense enough, on the big side 3 another black, not yet ready 4 Nobbs 5 Denton 6 Bradbury. One or two in this class should have stayed at home (empty Ennals) Hen 1968 10: 1 4 Sears, dun chequer already noted 2 Bradbury, black, unlucky to meet winner, good for this colour, will improve and do better 3 Austin, a splendid pigeon spoilt by being slightly pinched behind wattle 5 Eldson 6 Nobbs (empty Ennals) AOC Ad cock 11: These did take some sorting out. 1 4 Bradbury, just like old times to see one of Harry's outstanding mealies, all round perfection, just lacking in bar clarity, but here I am being super critical, as good as I have seen in this colour 2 Ennals, this one did have the bars, and was only a fraction behind 3 Denton, a reachy blue, I nominated it for best in show at Thame last year, very unlucky today 5 Austin 6 7 Sears (empty Wheeler) Ad hen 6: Not an outstanding class. 1 Ennals, noted silver, well ahead and shown in fine fettle 2 Bradbury, deep blue 3 5 Sears, another blue, not a very good eye 4 Bagley 6 Nobbs 1968 cock 6: 1 Austin, cream, already described 2 Denton lavender lace, attractive, bright colour, the right size and stance for me, I congratulate its owner on a bird of tremendous promise 3 4 Sears, former another good blue, well barred, black very dense 5 Bradbury 6 Ennals Hen 1968 9: 1 Hutchinson, (continued foot of next column)

The mouse Fancy

Continuing the series

THE WORLD OF MICE

JOHN C DAWSON

THE LITTLE POCKET MOUSE (*Perognathus*) is a small, dainty underground dweller with long hind limbs for jumping. Its many species include the smallest rodent on the North American continent, the Pacific Pocket Mouse which, when fully grown, weighs only one-third of an ounce; the largest of the group, the big California Pocket Mouse, will weigh an ounce. They are found only in Western North America and do not live east of the Mississippi River.

The northern limit of their homeland is Ashcraft, British Columbia; the southern is Thalpan, in the Valley of Mexico. The life of the pocket mouse is spent for the most part in dry places, where there is often no water for many months of the year.

The sun in a cloudless sky, day after day, burns up all the moisture in the ground, leaving it hot and parched. In these torrid surroundings the tiny pocket mice are born and live until their last, long sleep.

As the sun goes down, these little denizens of the desert open their doors and set out on their quest for food. Standing up on their still-thin legs, they pluck seeds from the grasses and plants with their tiny white hands. Each hand independently stuffs seeds from the grasses and plants into the fur-lined cheek pouches and moves so fast that the motion becomes a blur. The cheek pouches swell to seemingly bursting capacity (each pouch actually holds from one-eighth to one-half of a teaspoonful of plunder, according to the size of the species). The gentle and inoffensive pocket mice live alone except when breeding. Each mouse has its own little burrow.

The burrow consisting of a simple straight tunnel with a grass-lined nest chamber at the end. Normally the outside door is closed when the pocket mouse is at home, but should some predator break down the door and enter, the resourceful little mouse will put roadblocks in the way. Mating is not confined to any particular season over the entire pocket-mouse range. A female usually bears two families a year. Each comes between three and four weeks after mating; two to eight tiny babies make up the litter. A life of not more than a few months lies before them—there are too many hungry mouths waiting to devour the average pocket mouse. Its worst enemies are foxes, skunks, weasels, badgers, coyotes, snakes and owls.

We have said there are a large number of different species of pocket mice. They fall into two well-defined groups. Those in the first group have fur that is fine and soft, while those in the second have an almost spiny coat. The general colour is in varying shades of buff, with a greater or lesser admixture of black.

These creatures are all small to tiny in size. An animal of average size is about five inches long and often the tail is almost half of this.

DORMICE—Nearly everyone knows the Dormouse by name but who has ever seen one—outside Alice in Wonderland, at any rate? What are the facts about this popular but mysterious creature.

First of all, the Dormouse is found only in the old world. Second, it looks more like a squirrel than a mouse. It is covered with a very fine, soft, silky fur and has a long, bushy tail. Its round eyes are large and bright. The Dormouse has the ways as well as the pleasing appearance of a squirrel; it spends most of its life in the trees, and is fond of nuts, acorns and seeds, and in addition apples and other fruits.

The 'dor' in Dormouse is supposed to come from the French word *dormir*—it means 'to sleep'—or an English dialect word 'dorm' meaning 'to doze'. Like many other rodents, the Dormouse sleeps through the lean winter season, often it hibernates as long as six months at a time, and so it has earned a place among the traditional 'seven sleepers' of the animal world (the other six distinguished by this title are the ground squirrel, marmot, hedgehog, badger, bat and bear, but of course many other animals are winter sleepers too).

As autumn draws near, the Dormouse gets fatter and fatter. Finally, by October, it is ready to hole up in a hollow tree or an abandoned bird's nest, weatherproofed with

again leading with a true Smerle, admired its carriage and attention, shown to perfection, congratulations 2 Ennals, another exhibit which showed skill in breeding to the re-like to see as an adult 4 Bradbury 6 Gynn quired standard 3 5 Bagley, promising, would (empty Sears 2, Denton) Specials, NAP certificates, Austin and Sears; best opposite age and best self or chequered 1968, Sears; best self or chequered adult, Eldson; best adult and AOC adult, Sears; best 1968 and AOC 1968, Austin. Club rosettes, Bradbury and Austin. JOHN TREVISICK

The National Mouse Club's trophies

DURING the past few weeks several fanciers have asked me, either direct or by writing, to give the dates and donors of the National Mouse Club's principal trophies.

This is a task no one can be certain about in several respects. There is no information in any club book I have on the dates of the cups being given to the club. I will do my best as far as my memory will allow me to give a description where I can. Please do understand I do not guarantee the dates to be accurate. Should any of the club's older members know of the history of any of the cups I shall be pleased to hear from them.

The Woodiwiss Bowl—This is awarded for best in show at the annual show. It was given to the club by its first president in about 1895 or 1896, the late Sam Woodiwiss. It was first competed for at Beverley, Yorks, in 1896 and was won by E N Hewson with a Spotted, the forerunner of the present day Broken. The judge was Enoch Welburn who was also well known in the cavy fancy. This was the club's first trophy.

Mendel Gold Cup—This was given by C M Stoney for best type among first prize winners at the annual and summer cup shows. Mr Stoney was a great student of the Mendel theory, hence the Mendel Cup. Valued at £50, I believe the cup was given in the 1930's.

Coronation Cup—This was subscribed to by members of the NMC and competed for at the annual show only. It goes to the best mouse in the opposite sections to the winner of the Woodiwiss Bowl—if a Marked wins best in show then the best from the Self, Tan and AOV sections would compete for it.

President's Cup—This is awarded for best in show at the club's spring cup show. This was donated to the club by Mr Selby Thomas who was president in 1919 and also in 1921 to 1924. He was also secretary in 1920. The cup was first competed for in 1923. Mr Selby Thomas went on to become secretary of the National Homing Pigeon Union and during the war years he was secretary of the War Pigeon Association. What great men we have had in the mouse fancy.

King and Country Cup—This is for second best in show at the spring cup show. The donor was Mrs Gazzard. It was given in about 1924. Mrs Gazzard was, at this period, a real live wire in the mouse fancy and a noted exhibitor in a few varieties.

Louise Cup—This is for best Even, Broken or Variegated at the spring and annual show. Mr Robert Clark collected for the trophy when he lived in Yorkshire and gave a considerable amount himself toward it. The exact date of its first being competed for I don't know. STUART SMITH

We find this mouse in western North America from British Columbia and Saskatchewan south to Northern Mexico. The scorpion mouse, *onychomys torridus*, is smaller and has a bright tawny coat and longer tail. It makes its home in the hot, arid deserts of the south west. The grasshopper mouse does not hibernate even in the coldest part of its territory. Its body and tail usually become fat and plump in the autumn and it does make some efforts to store up food for winter use.

BALLAD TO A FANCY MOUSE

I'm an Upper Class Champagne mouse,
Oh, Society Life's for me!
I live at the back of a beautiful house,
And invite lots of friends to tea.
And nothing but furs will I wear,
For there's nothing like furs, you'll agree;
And, oh, how I make all the onlookers stare,
For I'm perfect as perfect can be!

I go to all the good shows,
You'll find me there in my best.
Because in such places everyone knows
That appearance is put to the test.
I've travelled the length of the land,
From the South to the North to the West;
And I must be seen where the Quality stand,
And not be approached by the Rest!

I'm quite a gregarious soul,
I like to have others around,
For there's no point in hiding in some little hole,
Or keeping one's nose to the ground.
They say I'm a bit of a snob,
Well I'm not the worst snob to be found,
But I do like to keep myself free from the mob,
For how else is my fame to resound?

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