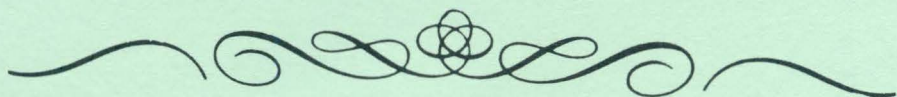
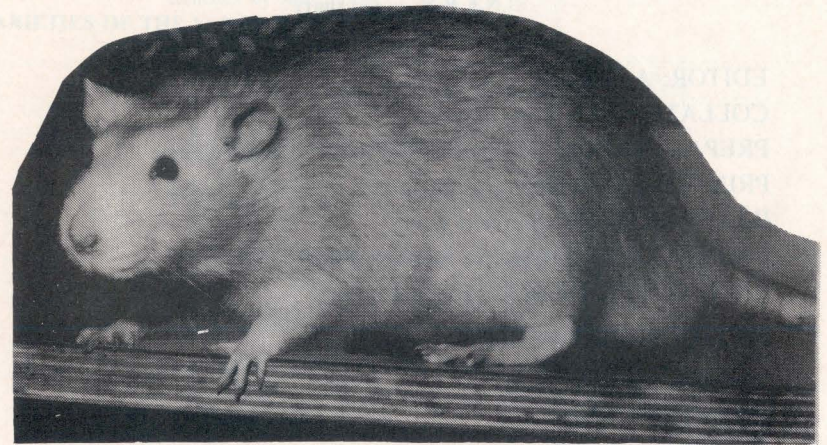


# National Fancy Rat Society



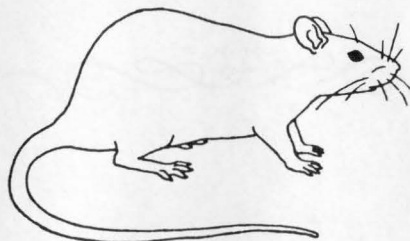
# HANDBOOK

National Fancy Rat Society



**HANDBOOK**

Copyright National Fancy Rat Society © 1989/1991



A "PRO-RAT-A" Publication

© N.F.R.S. (1989/1991)

EDITOR: Ann Storey

COLLATED BY: Nick Mays

PREPARATION & GRAPHIC DESIGN: Gerald Coley

PRINTED BY: Winckley Publishing

ILLUSTRATIONS: Stephen Pearl

FRONT COVER DESIGN: Stephen Pearl

BACK COVER DESIGN: Coral Embury

PHOTOGRAPH CREDITS:

Clive Peters: Page 3 ©

Rob Myers: Pages 11 & 49 ©

Nick Mays: Pages 6, 7 & 18 ©

All photographs copyright © respective photographers.

All illustrations © Stephen Pearl/N.F.R.S. (1989/1991)

Revised & Reprinted 1991

## CONTENTS

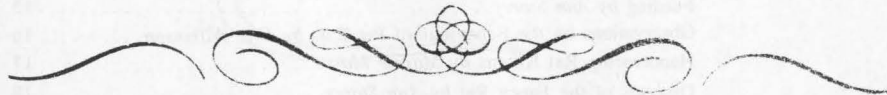
Introduction by Editor, Ann Storey.....	6
Foreword by Geoff Izzard.....	6
Foreword by Joan Pearce.....	7
<b>HISTORY</b>	
The National Fancy Rat Society — In The Beginning by Nick Mays.....	8
Commentary by Roger Edmondson.....	11
<b>THE CARE OF FANCY RATS</b>	
The Shed Rattery by Ann Storey.....	12
Housing by Sara Handley.....	13
Feeding by Ann Storey.....	15
Observations on the Behaviour of Pet Rats by Eric Wilkinson.....	16
Handrearing Rat Kittens by Marnie Mays.....	17
Diseases of the Fancy Rat by Ann Storey.....	18
<b>BREEDING FANCY RATS</b>	
Breeding by Ann Storey.....	25
In-breeding by Ann Storey.....	29
Genetics by Ann Storey.....	30
<b>VARIETIES OF THE FANCY RAT</b>	
The Self Group by Ann Storey.....	36
The Black-Eyed White by Diane Wildman.....	38
The Chocolate by John Wells.....	39
The Marked Varieties by Ann Storey.....	39
The Hooded by John Wells.....	42
Himalayan and Siamese by Eric Wilkinson.....	44
The Cinnamon Pearl by Sara Handley.....	46
The Pearl by Ann Storey.....	46
The Silver Group by Ann Storey.....	47
Breeding the Silver Grey by Paul Threapleton.....	47
The Agouti Group by Ann Storey.....	48
The Silver Fawn by Ann Storey.....	49
The Rex by Beverly Bruges.....	50
<b>MISCELLANEOUS RAT MATTERS</b>	
Tailless Rats by Nick Mays.....	51

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first Handbook of the National Fancy Rat Society. From the initial idea put forward by Mr A D Jones to the production of the finished article has been somewhat longer (and indeed larger) than anticipated but I like to think that it is the most comprehensive work of its kind available. The Rat Fancy has grown in leaps and bounds since its formation in 1976 but the information available has never been brought together before. If all goes well, it is hoped that another handbook, with updated articles, will be produced in a couple of years.

I would like to thank all the people who contributed to this Handbook. Without you all, this would not have been possible.

ANN STOREY  
Editor



## FOREWORD



By Geoff Izzard, Life President & Co Founder

It gives me great pleasure to write this short introduction to the Handbook of the National Fancy Rat Society which has, at long last, seen the light of day.

I hope that it will not only prove to be of great value to the membership but also act as a useful source of information to the general public, particularly those who are continually asking for literature on the Fancy Rat.

A lot of work has gone into this Handbook and I would like to thank all concerned in its preparation. When Joan Pearce and I originally formed the Society on the thirteenth of January 1976 we had no idea of how things would work out but we need have had no fear on this account.

We are both very grateful to all members, past and present, for making the Society what it is today. I hope, in fact I am sure, it will prove its worth in all respects.

GEOFF IZZARD  
30th December 1988

## FOREWORD



By Joan Pearce, Life President & Co Founder

In all truth I can say that for once in my life I was in at the very beginning of something that has far outstripped my wildest dreams.

Back in 1973 I started studying with the Open University and the following year I took a course called *An Introduction to Psychology*. Being a teacher, I was very interested in behavioural psychology, as this suggested that the desire to learn could be stimulated by rewards for correct responses and punishment for wrong responses.

Part of the OU courses is attendance at a Summer school, for at me this time at Sussex University. Here students were able to take part in more concentrated studies and carry out supervised experiments. As is very usual animals are often used in these and I had to train a rat in a 'Skinner Box' to make the right responses, fortunately for the rat by rewarding it each time it got nearer to what was required. My problem was that although I had handled many types of animals in my life . . . A RAT! Aggh! What if I touched its tail? The kind gentleman I was working with picked it up and put it in the box. It didn't bite him. I worked all morning training it, I forgot what to do. All I remember was that, as you all will have guessed, it learnt VERY FAST and so did I. I was hooked. Did I really have to return that lovely white creature to its own cage? Perhaps I could take it home at the end of the week? NO. I was heartbroken, I had never seen rats for sale. Where could I get one? Local pet shops thought I was mad. 'Fur & Feather' was no help. My last hope was to attend the show at Alexandra Palace at the end of the year. I couldn't wait.

I arrived at the Palace and I must admit I was distracted by all the other beautiful animals but I looked all over. I asked and looked some more but people were going home and I hadn't seen a single rat, let alone been able to get one to take home. Sadly I made my way home, across the road to wait for the bus.

The man had some cages, they were too small for rabbits, too big for mice. No! Nice ladies don't speak to strangers at bus stops. The bus came and we travelled a short distance and we stopped. Tottenham were playing at home, we were stuck in the crowds. He looked a NICE man, perhaps I could ask him. 'You wouldn't happen to have RATS in those boxes would you?'

The rest is history. That nice man was Geoff Izzard and he did have rats in those boxes and yes, he could let me have not one, but a pair of Argente (Silver Fawn) babies as soon as they were old enough to leave their mother.

I think I should have seen the 'twinkle' in Geoff's eye; the N.F.R.S. was on its way.

A while after Geoff and I were persuaded by some of our friends in the London and Southern Counties Mouse Club who had encouraged us to exhibit our stock at their shows, that there was a need for a separate Rat Club. Obviously they were right. After all we didn't have anyone to say we were not. We might succeed where others had failed. Fortunately for the Society others have come after Geoff and myself who are like minded.

I am very proud to still belong to a Society which has carried on in the tradition of that NICE man I met on that bus all those years ago. Always ready to welcome newcomers and support each other through the bad times as well as the good and come out laughing at the end. Remember rats are friendly, intelligent animals — what an example for humans.

We may have had our problems, but always present that welcoming, friendly, united (breeders and pet keepers) face to the world and I am sure the National Fancy Rat Society will continue to grow beyond my wildest dreams, and before long the name will have to change to the INTER-National Fancy Rat Society.

JOAN PEARCE 7th January 1989



Jack Black. Queen Victoria's Royal rat-catcher, circa 1850.

## HISTORY

### THE NATIONAL FANCY RAT SOCIETY — IN THE BEGINNING

By Nick Mays

The National Fancy Rat Society has been in existence now for several years. Its members enjoy the many benefits provided in the form of a regular news Journal, several shows per year (at least one per month — if not two), friendly rivalry between exhibitors, a congenial atmosphere and, most importantly, a wide selection of colours and patterns within the large number of varieties of Fancy Rats available to keep, breed and exhibit.

Things have not always been at such a high peak — for members or Fancy Rats. Very few people realise that the N.F.R.S. is in fact the fourth Fancy Rat Club/Society (at least!) to be formed since Queen Victoria's day, albeit the most successful. Rat Fancying itself goes back to the late 19th Century, if not earlier.

The 'Coming of the Fancy Rat' started in the early 18th Century with the arrival in Britain of the Brown or Norway Rat (*Rattus Norvegicus*), so called for the fact that these rats were brought into the country at the major ports abroad trading vessels, which in turn had visited Asia where the rats originated and stowed away aboard many ships. Their arrival in Britain was noted in due course when they began to establish themselves firmly in dockland and, ultimately, further inland, usurping the indigenous population of Black Rats (*Rattus rattus*). They were christened the 'Hanoverian Rat', a popular, political in-joke at the time, due to their coincidental appearance at the time of the arrival of the Hanoverian Royal Family. To this day, the Black Rat can only be found in isolated colonies, mainly in dockland areas.

The spread of the Brown Rat all over the country became a serious problem. In answer to this, almost a species of their own, the professional Rat Catchers waged war upon the rats.

In Victorian London the Royal Rat Catcher, Jack Black, took a more studious interest in rats. He used to catch and keep some interestingly coloured rats, natural freaks such as Albinos, Blacks and Fawns. These he bred by crossing them together, noting with interest the colouration of their offspring. He wrote a book about his selective breeding programme and the results. It was largely as a result of this that towards the end of the 19th Century, certain people began to think of coloured rats as potentially desirable animals and the whole idea of Fancy Rats was born.

That Fancy Rats actually became recognised as such was thanks to the Mouse Fancy. Mice had been steadily rising in popularity in Fancy circles since the early 1890s, aided greatly by several articles penned by interested parties in the Fanciers' magazine **Fur & Feather**. The culmination of this was that in 1895, a group of Mouse fanciers founded the National Mouse Club. The club really took off when a young man named Walter Maxey was appointed as its second Hon Secretary in 1897 (a post he held for ten years!), many shows were staged and several new members were added to the club's ranks. Thus it was in early 1901 a Miss Mary Douglas wrote an open letter to Maxey in the pages of **Fur & Feather** asking whether the N.M.C. would consider 'opening its doors' to the large cousins of mice, namely rats. Miss Douglas herself was an immensely interesting character, a 'spinster of independent means'. She loved animals, but was especially fond of rats, having kept them as pets ever since she was a young girl. Her appeal was successful, and, largely thanks to Maxey's help the N.M.C. Committee started to cater for Fancy Rats. The first ever classes for Fancy Rats were staged at the Aylesbury Show on 24 October 1901.

Things progressed speedily for rats from then onwards. Although there were never as many rat fanciers as mouse fanciers, Fancy Rats were bred in a vast range (for those days) of colours and markings. Entries of rats at shows were high. In many instances Fancy Rats were superior in type and variety to many of the varieties of Fancy Mice. Miss Douglas must take much of the credit for rats' popularity in those days, as she wrote prolifically about them in **Fur & Feather**. She herself held the post of Hon Secretary after Walter Maxey three times and later became President. By 1912 Fancy Rats were such a part of the Fancy, that the club's title became the National Mouse and Rat Club. For all this though, several rats of those times were not as tame as those we know today, due in part perhaps to the number of cross matings with wild rats. There were several instances of rats leaping from show cages and of judges being bitten, including Maxey himself. For this reason Fancy Rats were more the province of the more well to do fanciers and were never popular with the 'man-in-the-street' fanciers who couldn't afford to have unhandlable, specialist livestock and probably saw more than enough of their wild cousins anyway!

The Fancy survived the First World War but the rat side declined somewhat from 1918 onwards. Miss Douglas was ill and couldn't get to so many shows or write so many articles. She died in November 1921 and was greatly mourned by fanciers in all Fancies. Things may have been bleak for the Rat Fancy but for a young, enthusiastic fancier named Ralph Blake. He worked tirelessly as N.M.R.C. Hon Secretary for mice and especially for rats, writing long articles in **Fur & Feather** on the merits of rats and generally 'whipping up' rat fanciers to enter as many as possible at shows. However, Blake's influence soon departed, as Blake was offered a job on a Rabbit Farm in Sussex, the pre-conditions being that he moved from his home in Ross-on-Wye to Sussex, for a house went with the job and that he give up all publicity for and association with the 'Long Tail Fancy'. Such job offers were, in the 1920s, rare, to say the least, so Blake accepted the pre-conditions, left the Fancy and took up his new post, later becoming an influential and accomplished rabbit fancier and judge. Soon after his departure, a Mr William Turton took up the Fancy Rat cause and bred several excellent specimens (along with a great deal of equally excellent mice). However, support from other 'Ratters' was sadly lacking. The N.M.R.C. itself was in a state of disarray by this time, having set up many specialist and regional mouse (and rat) clubs some years earlier. The financial position of the Club was poor and the Northern Fancy Mouse Association, the biggest of the regional clubs had more money and influence than the parent club at that time. A deal was struck by mouse fanciers whereby most of these specialist and regional clubs were absorbed by the N.M.R.C. So, in 1929, the big re-organisation took place with the National Mouse Club reinstated in name and influence — the words 'and Rats' being dropped from its title as few, if any rats were exhibited at this time. In 1931, support for Fancy Rats was formally dropped, although references to the club catering for them were retained in the rules, should they ever regain their lost popularity. In the mid to late 1930s, a Mr D Tuck tried to re-kindle interest in Fancy Rats via advertisements in **Fur & Feather**, proudly proclaiming that his was the largest commercial mouse and rat farm in the country, which it probably was. Again, there was little or no response from rat fanciers. Occasionally one or two would be shown as curiosities at large shows, such as the Bradford Championship Show, but the Rat Fancy was, to all intents and purposes, dead.

Things looked up for Fancy Rats however when an orchestrated revival came about in 1957. A group of Fanciers from the South Coast area began to write articles about rats in **Fur & Feather** and some interest was generated. These fanciers, Eddie Gay, Derek Rayfield, Frank Pink and Mrs Jean Curzon succeeded in getting some rat classes staged at that year's Portsmouth & Southsea Town Show. A good number of rats were exhibited and, in response to this, the London & Southern Counties Mouse Club reinstated its own classes for rats into its show schedules and rules, having dropped them many years before. Articles continued to be written in **Fur & Feather**, and again classes were staged at the Portsmouth Show in 1958. However, the rat entry was noticeably lower, interest flagged and again Fancy Rats went into a period of decline. In 1962, a young Welsh fancier named Ron Phillips formed the **National Rat Club** and this fact was proudly proclaimed in **Fur & Feather** on 7 June 1962. A few interested fanciers joined up, some articles were run in **Fur & Feather** but just as quickly, interest in this first ever specialist

club for rats fizzled out. The club ceased to exist by 1963 without ever having staged a show. By this time also, the N.M.C. had dropped all references to rats from its rules, so apart from the London & Southern Counties Mouse Club, where occasionally a rat would be shown, all avenues for the advancement of Fancy Rats had been closed.

However, it was the L & SCMC's Hon Secretary, Eric Jukes, who tried to start a new rat club. In 1969 he wrote an article for the N.M.C. Yearbook proclaiming 1969 to be 'The Year of the Rat' and outlining his plans for the **International Fancy Rat Council**. Sadly, this failed to attract enough attention, so in 1970 Eric again tried to whip up interest in rats by proposing at the N.M.C. A.G.M. that the N.M.C. should promote the breeding and exhibition of Fancy Rats for a probationary period of five years. Although many fanciers backed the motion it failed to win the two-thirds majority necessary to get rats back into the N.M.C. rules. Then, when all seemed lost for Fancy Rats, the old maxim of 'third time lucky' came into play . . .

Geoff Izzard, an herpetologist (reptile specialist), had kept rats for a number of years and had taken a keen interest in the small number of colours and patterns that rats were available in at the time. With the help of a few contacts in the mouse fancy, he staged a small exhibition of Fancy Rats at the 1974 London Championship Show, in the hope of attracting some like-minded people. This met with rather limited success. However, upon leaving the show he missed his bus home and met Mrs Joan Pearce, a teacher, waiting at the bus stop. She had noticed the rats in their cages on Geoff's shopping trolley. They started talking about rats. Joan's interest in them stemming from a teaching course she had recently undertaken in which pets rats were used as the classroom animals. They exchanged addresses and later exchanged rats, then via Geoff's contacts, Eric Jukes and Albert Collins, they joined the London & Southern Counties Mouse Club which still had a few classes for Fancy Rats. Publicity in **Fur & Feather** brought some more interested potential rat fanciers to light and as a result support for the shows grew throughout 1975 which involved several additions and amendments to the initially small rat schedule.

Eventually the time came when the rat fanciers felt that it would be a very good idea to form a club or society purely for rat fanciers. The inaugural meeting was held on 13 January 1976 and **The National Fancy Rat Society** was born with Joan as Hon Secretary/Treasurer and Geoff as Show Secretary. Roy Robinson, a noted geneticist, was made the Society's Genetical Advisor from the very beginning, a post still held by him to this day.

The N.F.R.S. made its public debut at the Bradford Championship Show a couple of weeks later, by staging a well attended exhibition of Fancy Rats. Roy Robinson had bred a new variety of rat — a curly coated strain of Astrex, which for the N.F.R.S.'s purposes were named Rex. These too made their first public appearances at this historical exhibition and have remained firm favourites with many fanciers ever since. After this premier outing, the Society consolidated its position by a series of articles in **Fur & Feather** and gained several new members. Then came the next milestone in the Fancy Rat history — the staging of the first-ever 'rats only' show.

The first N.F.R.S. show was staged in Clymping, Sussex in April 1976 and with twenty-five exhibits judged by veteran fancier Eric Smith, proved to be quite successful. It was felt at this point that the Standards of Excellence needed amending, having been used from the old N.M. & R.C. standards, circa 1910. At first, show venues were inconsistent and far-flung, (although the Society staged their first 'London' show in November 1976 at Alexandra Palace) until early 1977 a hall in Epsom, Surrey was secured as a regular bi-monthly venue. This, together with the monthly L & SCMC shows and five summer 'Town Shows', ensured that the growing number of rat fanciers had plenty of opportunity to exhibit their fast improving stock. Eventually the Epsom venue was dropped in favour of venues nearer London such as Surbiton, Surrey, which for many years proved to be a successful, well-attended show.

The varieties of the rats themselves, like the show venues, became many and varied. From the original few colours, new varieties such as Mink, Pearl, Cinnamon Pearl, Silver Grey and Champagne quickly followed. Marked varieties saw a rapid increase in diversity with Hooded, Capped, Berkshire and Irish being bred in greater numbers and joined by Variegated. In 1978 it was announced that a strain of Himalayan rats had been discovered in a laboratory in Orly, France. Six adults were duly purchased and imported by the Society and their strangely marked offspring sold off as £5 'shares' to interested members. With careful breeding, the Himalayan was established, along with its 'sister variety', the ever popular Siamese.

Space does not permit the listing of all the N.F.R.S.'s achievements and milestones over the years since its formation. However, highlights have included the following: The establishment of the Society's journal *Pro-Rat-A*, a highly professional publication written by the members for the members, for many of whom this is their main contact with the Society; the establishment of a system of **Regional Co-ordinators** to take care of rat business and contact on a local basis, allowing many new shows to be staged for local members; the formation of the three-tier **N.F.R.S. Judging Panels**, whereby new Judges are trained and upgraded in stages until they reach maximum proficiency; points systems and Star ratings for grading shows; contact with and interchange of ideas — and rats — between the N.F.R.S. and the American and Swedish Rat Societies, formed in the years since the new 'rise of the Rats'; international contact with members and rat lovers across the globe; information services: a wide range of show venues. The

list grows year by year.

Although the membership numbers vary as people join, lapse and re-join, the Society can safely boast that its membership at any one time always exceeds 250. Given its range of national and international contact, the N.F.R.S. can in no way be considered insular, the downfall of many a club and society in the past.

Very few sneers of derision are directed at the N.F.R.S. from other fanciers now, for the dream of Mary Douglas has at last been realised. The Fancy Rat stands in its own right as an animal of high class. The early foundations and failures have not been entirely in vain, for thanks to the interest and dedication of many enthusiastic people, the modern rat fanciers, the many varieties of Fancy Rat are being carried forward and improved, new varieties discovered. Both National Fancy Rat Society and Fancy Rat are fact. They are here to stay.

## COMMENTARY

By Roger Edmondson

Being, I suppose, one of the few who remember some of the days of the old Rat Fancy of the twenties, I've been asked to put a few of those memories on paper.

First of all, I must make it quite clear that in those days I was a very young teenager, and I can only recall something of the Fancy in its dying days.

My memories of Mary Douglas, whom I believe I only met twice, are perhaps a little confused — one must remember that at my young age all adults seemed to be quite old! Mary Douglas seemed to be an old lady, actually I suppose she was around forty. She was very mannish, both in style and dress. Without doubt, but for Mary Douglas, H C Brookes and a few more people, there would have been no Fancy Rats Society, or any other shows catering for Fancy Rats.

The one person who I knew well who was really active in the Fancy at that time was Ralph Blake; one-time Secretary of the N.M. & R.C. and a breeder and exhibitor of Fancy Rats.

Contrary to the general belief the Fancy was never strong. It is doubtful, but for the fact that there were several monied people interested, if the Fancy would ever have got off the ground. The life of the Fancy was little more than twenty years. From the mid-twenties until the late sixties, except for a very limited period in the late thirties when D Tuck tried to re-kindle the Fancy, there was no club, fancy or shows catering for the Fancy Rat. Whether Mr Tuck would have been successful with his efforts but for the war is a matter for conjecture.

ROGER EDMONDSON, 1984

