

BREEDING AND CARE OF RATS AND MICE—ORIGIN

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DUE to the fact that tame rats and mice now hold a conspicuous position in the commercial world—more especially among the medical fraternity chiefly for experimental purposes—and also owing to the great demand there is for stock and the splendid chance the raising of these small animals offer as a business proposition, this book would be incomplete if this department were left out. It is all-important, and the information you will get here should enable even the very beginner to take up this wonderful enterprise profitably, as well as the entertainment to be derived therefrom.

Rats and mice belong to the rodent family—which is, a gnawing animal, originally natives of Southern Asia, that is, the common everyday rat and mouse, whose destruction we always seek. They are known everywhere in the world except in a few islands of the Pacific Ocean, and have followed man to all corners of the globe, and is still a regular traveler on steamboats, railroads and other means of transportation.

The two common species, the black and white rat, are found in nearly all parts of the world. It is commonly understood that the black rat was the first to reach America, sometime in the year 1544. It was a matter of about two hundred and fifty years later before the brown rat made entrance into this country, of course, getting here by means of secreting itself in vessels of transportation, such as above mentioned, and disembarking itself "at port," as it were, enjoying liberty and exercising its prolific characteristic of breeding, consequently the "swarm" of the common rats and mice in our country at this time.

In their characteristics, color and size, unlike other animals, they are the same all over the world, doing most of their "destructive" work at night, possessing large eyes and ears, long whiskers, all of which are suited for midnight activities.

Rats differ from mice only in being larger. The black rat is between seven and eight inches in length, while the brown grows to be ten or eleven inches long; the latter is much stronger, and has shorter hair, a shorter tail, smaller ears, and a less pointed nose. The long tail is believed to be useful in climbing and in jumping. These same principles apply to the common mouse—the only difference being the size, as already mentioned.



BALD-FACE PINK-EYED SILVER MOUSE

The common brown or black house rat or the little brown ordinary mouse from time to time have been tamed and domesticated by people who have interested themselves in this "taming" process, then by reason of closer observation and training, breeding, etc., the white rats and mice have been produced, as well as many varieties and standards—very nearly three dozen different species so far as solid and mixed colors are concerned—produced by reason of specialty breeding. Then there is the Japanese Waltzing Mouse—

characteristic of freaks of nature and queer antics which is mighty interesting to the observing eye of the rat and mouse fancier and even entertaining to the untrained eye.

On Buying and Breeding Stock

In purchasing your breeders be sure you are getting good stock as this means more to you than anything else.

You had better get a few at the start and see what kind of stock they are, before you get a large supply on hand.

Don't take up some pet stock paper and look over the ads to see how cheap you can get your stock. It always pays to get absolutely the best there is.

You must not be backward in paying a fair price for your breeding stock. Nine times out of ten it is the stock you buy to start that spells your success or failure. So try and get your stock from a breeder who breeds up to the standard as they cost but a very little bit more, and costs no extra to feed and to take care of; then you will have good healthy stock and you can sell them for more money and are sure of more orders when you fill your order with good stock than when you send out a lot of sick stock as no one wants that kind, and you will have less trouble with your breeding stock.

A good healthy rat or mouse should have eyes large and bold, and their tails long and tapering and free from sores. Coat should be short, thick and glossy and they should be free from sneezing.

Male and female are kept together in a cage, but when the mother has young the male should be taken away and put in a separate cage. This will avoid any risk of the male rat or mouse eating the young. Also see that they have plenty of feed especially when having young, or else the female may devour her babies.

Rats and mice breed several times a year, producing from six to fifteen young to a litter, and as there is always a ready market for them it is certainly a good paying business if managed properly. Hospitals and laboratories handle and experiment on thousands of rats and mice yearly. Then there are hundreds of people who keep rats and mice for the sole purpose of pets.

Housing

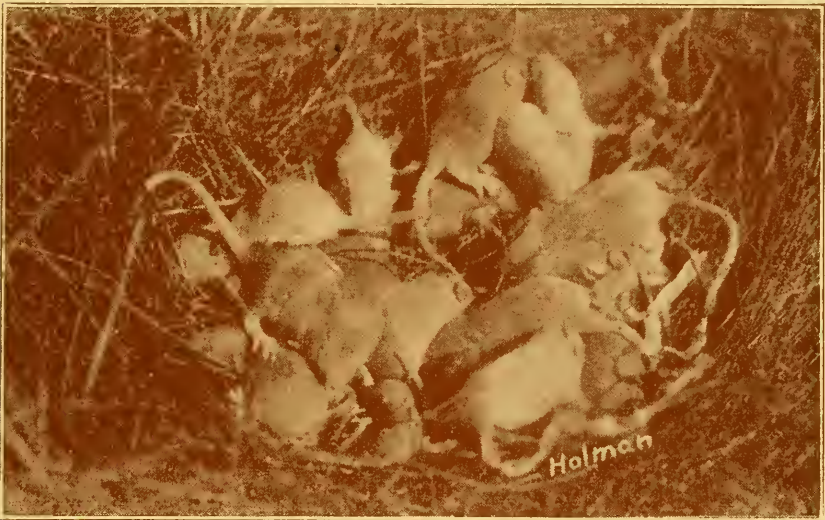
We know of no other pets that can be so cheaply housed as these little fellows. There are many ways to house them

but most any good sound box will do that is large enough to give them plenty of room and is arranged so you can care for them.

Use a piece of screen wire on front of the cage and on the door too, and make the door to open from the top.

In this cage put 6 females and 2 males and a bed box; a cigar box makes a good bed. Then place the boxes in rows on the floor.

Most any place will do if it is dry and plenty of fresh air at all times. Always keep your cages dry. It is a good idea to keep some saw dust or straw or something of this kind in the cages to take up the dampness.



A NEST OF SILVER MICE

You will find a barn or any outbuildings that are not in use that can be made free from the cold winds and snows will make a fine place for mice and rats. A cage about 12 inches by 28 to 30 inches long with a bedroom 8 by 12 inches, cage to be 6 to 8 inches deep; for the bedroom use a nest of straw in summer, and in the winter use a bed made from cat tails, which the mice will pull to bits and use it for nest bedding. Put in this cage 6 females and 1 male. Then every three weeks look over the little ones and if you see any that are about one-third grown and eat grain wean them. Use a larger box or cage for the young; a cage 3 feet long and 2 feet wide with a large nest room.

In this cage you can keep from 50 to 100 young. When the young are weaned you put the little females in one cage and the males in another cage.

A mouse carries her young 21 days before they are born and a rat 28 days.

Feeding

Care should be taken in feeding your mice and rats if you want to get good results from them. Always feed good food and feed once a day and at night only just what they will clean up over night so they won't leave any to sour. Always give fresh feed each night; clean out the feed vessels daily. If there is any food left feed it to the chickens, but give the rats and mice fresh feed each night. One thing you must not forget, mice must have feed before them at all times; it will keep them in good shape. Mice that do not have all they want to eat and have to go without feed sometimes start eating each other. So do not forget to feed your mice every night. They should be given plenty of fresh water at all times. They will eat most any kind of grain and seed but when kept confined a little more attention is given to feeding. If you feed properly the death rate will be greatly reduced. A well balanced ration—one that will keep your stock in the best condition, is one you should feed regularly. Care should be taken to get the right amount of protein and fats and carbohydrates. Some have one way of feeding, some another. Here is more than one ration. You can pick out the one you think best, all of these rations bring good stock:

Ration No. 1

Oats, 20 lbs.; buckwheat, 10 lbs.; whole corn, 8 lbs., wheat, 5 lbs.; millet, 3 lbs.; sunflower seed, 6 lbs.

Ration No. 2

Oatmeal, 25 lbs.; scratch feed, 75 lbs. Milk to drink once daily. *No water.*

Ration No. 3

Scratch feed, 95 lbs.; green feed, 5 lbs.; water morning and night for summer time.

These feeds are just as good for rats as they are for mice, but you know that rats are fed twice a day, night and morning. Rats and mice should have greens, at times you will find lettuce, dandelions and watercress are the best. Do not give your stock any cabbage as it may kill them; they are very fond of live crickets and grasshoppers. Dry bread crusts, grain, corn, green food, vegetables and fruits should be the general diet for your stock, fed as per the above tabulation. In warm weather, corn and nuts should be fed sparingly. Meat should never be given, or else your stock will become vicious and devour one another.

CAUTION.—A good sized piece of wood, preferably a piece of green wood with the bark on, should be left in the cage at all times for the animals to gnaw upon, otherwise the teeth of your rats will grow abnormally long, which will eventually kill them.

Diseases of Rats and Mice

Diseases in mice and rats are very few, and if you give the proper feed and care you will not have any trouble of this kind. Disinfect once a week with any good disinfectant on the market.

Diarrhoea is an excessive action of the bowels. *Causes:* It is more often due to sudden changes from some food low in its percentage of protein to one having a high percentage; also to sour and musty food, and damp cages and so on. *Symptoms:* The evacuations are frequently watery and offensive, and if not checked at once the animal will get very thin and weakly, then little can be done to save it.

Treatment: Remove sick ones to a nice, clean, dry cage and feed boiled rice and warm boiled milk; do not feed any food of watery nature from then until cured.

Colds consist of an inflammation of the mucous membranes. *Causes:* Are usually brought on by subjecting the animal to a sudden change of temperature, or draft, or dampness. *Symptoms:* A dry cough, sneezing and a watery-like substance running from the eyes; if not treated at once little can be done that will effect a cure.

Treatment: Take all water away from them and give them fresh water with two drops of tincture of Aconac to each teaspoonful of water. If eyes are running watery, bathe them with a solution of boracic acid. To make solution,

take one teaspoonful of boracic acid to a pint of warm water. Use this two or three times a day and make fresh every day; use a piece of cotton to apply it with.

No. 2 Cure for Colds: At night take a piece of onion and cut up some for each cage; cut pieces about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long, give the sick stock some every other day until they are cured.

CAUTION.—Always separate the sick stock from the healthy ones to prevent spreading of any diseases. This is important.



WHITE ALBINO RAT

Physical Culture

Rats and mice delight in exercise, and branches and perches should be provided, in addition to any windings and swings. The more exercise and play your stock gets, the healthier and robust will be your production—consequently a more prosperous and successful business.

Always work for and aim at the highest attainment in your enterprise. Conduct your rat and mice activities on

business-like lines—heed the instructions here given, and you will experience success at all times.

Varieties, Exhibition, Etc.

There are numerous breeds or varieties of tame rats and mice, but each belongs to one of the two species, and has been the result of experimental and scientific breeding by those fanciers who have interested themselves therein, and endeavored to produce “something different” from that already in existence, and to improve specimens, and so forth, by selecting and breeding.

Pure white animals with pink eyes are the commonest kind. Then there are those that are white with brown or black spots, while others are “tortoiseshell,” or several different colors combined. There are also other varieties which are pale gray, others black with white markings, and others yellow or orange. Among the Rat and Mouse fancy, the different breeds are known by the following different names: *Agoutis*, of a rich brown color, ticked all over with orange hairs; eyes are black; the underneath body color being rufus red—the color of the real Belgian Hare rabbit. *Blacks*, of a solid color—lustrous appearance, in popularity, comes second to the white rat and mouse. *Solid Blue*, very definite of a slate shade, though there is still some experimentation going on in the production of this specimen. *Broken Marked Black-Eyed* and the *Broken Marked Pink-Eyed*. As this would indicate, the colors are not even, there being a mixture, but with certain specific markings as mentioned about the eyes. *Solid Chocolate* placed in the same category as the Blue, the only difference being the color. *Chocolate and Tan*. While there are many fanciers who prefer the solid colors, still there are many raisers who appreciate the mixed colors, and take quite a great deal of interest in producing stock of two or more colors—even markings—distances, etc. *Cinnamon*, another uncommon color; the coat should be a rich brown, ticked with chocolate hairs. *Creams*, perhaps the third in popularity among the solid-color varieties. This variety attracts great attention. Once produced in this color, they will nearly always produce that way. *Dutch Marked* is very pretty and pleasing to behold, and, while there is a good demand for them, they are not so easily produced as some of the other more-than-one-color. The markings should be very

much after those of the Dutch rabbit. *Grey Agoutis* are considered quite pretty among fanciers and are very successful at shows; the coat has a similar appearance to that of the silver grey rabbit, and the belly-coat should be of silver grey. Then there are *Solid Reds*; these are scarce, comparatively speaking, yet offer a whole lot of attraction to the practiced eye of the fancier. Among others there are: *Harliquin*, *Lilacs*, *Plums or Plum Silvers*, *Sables*, *Sable and White*, *Silvers*, *Silver and Tans*, *Silver Grays*, *Tortoise Shell*, *Variegated*, *Etc.*

The above-mentioned colorings apply particularly to the *Mouse*; as to the *Rats*, they are produced in such colorings as *Agoutis*, *Blues*, *Chocolates*, *Yellow and Whites*, in particular. There may be a few others, though not generally recognized. Then there is what is known as the *Hooded Rat*, possessing a square-cut hood, with a narrow pencil line along the back. It is generally accepted that the hood and pencil line may be of any color on a ground of white; the eyes may be either black or red.

The so-called "Japanese Waltzing Mice," science has been unable to account for, though some who have made a keen study of the peculiarity of this particular mouse say that it has a brain disease which causes it to run in circles or in an erratic manner. They were originally produced in Japan, and may be bred easily in confinement. However, this mouse is particularly amusing with its freakish behavior, antics, and so forth. It is quite likely that this specie, in time, will be no more, as it is found that by cross-breeding the "antics" are gradually being eliminated, so very much evidenced in the progeny of this cross-breeding.

Rats and mice are easily kept and do not require a great deal of care. They always seem happy and are very prolific. There are probably no animals in the world that are more easily handled and more entertaining generally than Rats and Mice, as well as offering a very profitable business proposition to the ambitious man, woman, boy or girl. The cost of keep is but very little, and the profits are large.