

Karla Barber & Bareback Rats

By Nancy Ross



Twenty-one years ago, in 1969, Karla's family pet rat, a much loved black hooded cutie named Cookie, had her first litter. Most of Cookie's babies did not have the stripe down their back, but rather had a row of spots of various sizes. Karla turned her disappointment into a challenge--to see if it were possible, through selective breeding to develop a rat with no markings below the hood. It took a lot of time and patience, but 14 years later, the first true bareback was born. It was so exciting for Karla to find her in the nest! She had a long dark hood with a perfectly straight edge and a bright personality as a bonus. Unfortunately, this rat did not produce any bareback babies.

About two years later, two more barebacks popped up, a beige and a black from different litters. Unfortunately, due to a couple of freak accidents, neither lived long enough to reproduce. Karla almost gave up, but luckily she considered all the efforts and advances she had made and kept the project going. She carefully line-bred and out-crossed, introducing other colors as well. Within a year, barebacks of various colors began showing up almost regularly. By then it became evident that the barebacks were genetically viable.

She applied to the American Fancy Rat and Mouse Association for recognition of the barebacks as a distinct marking, and in January, 1987, she was able to show them for the first time in their own

standardized section. Since then, barebacks have been shown in agouti, apricot, beige, black, champagne, chocolate, fawn and lilac. Bareback will be a recognized marking in the American Rat, Mouse & Hamster Society standards.

Karla Barber is a founding member of ARMHS. She and her husband, Chuck, have three children, two sons and a daughter, and she works as a court translator for the County of San Diego. Along with her rats, she has horses, goats, chickens, cats and flowers at her Lakeside Ranch. Her rattery is called "Emerald Hill" where she keeps between 100-200 rats. Karla, unlike many other large breeders, has names for all of her rats. After years of breeding thousands of rats, it is amazing that she can remember each animal by name. If you would like to join the continuing quest toward the ideal bareback in each color, Karla invites you to contact her at: Karla J. Barber, Emerald Hill Ranch, 9506 Emerald Grove Ave., Lakeside, CA 92040 (619) 561-5505.

Of course if you don't want to go through the years of work that Karla did, you could take her husband Chuck's advice when he says the fastest way to a bareback rat is with a Gillette razor!!



A big thank you to those that sent in their husbandry questionnaires filled with such thought-filled suggestions.

REMINDER: If you have not had the time to fill in the questionnaire, even one suggestion from your rodentry will help create the manuals. We need everyone's support. Send those hints in!!!

Wanted: XXX-tra Large Rats for a new breeding program. Male and female. If you have one, or know of one, please call RoseAnn at Rat-Tastrophe (619) 277-7728. Will pay top \$\$ for the right one.