

## RAISING FANCY MICE AN INEXPENSIVE HOBBY

By W. L. Cotta

**H**AVING resumed the breeding of fancy mice after a lapse of 20 years, I write these lines to acquaint others with the virtues of this smallest and daintiest of animal pets.

First, the breeding of fancy mice, in the almost endless array of beautiful colors, is probably the least expensive of any hobby involving live stock. They are not difficult to feed or rear, and certainly not at all fussy about their pens, which are also small and inexpensive to make.

Good breeding stock may be had for as low as 50 cents each, up to two or three dollars per pair. I have very nice breeding boxes, equipped with my own design of sanitary drinking fountains, home-made, for as little as 25c each box, complete, exclusive of labor. One can, if he wishes, construct somewhat more elaborate and ornamental boxes for less than \$1.00 each.

The little mice themselves are very interesting and attractive, become quite tame and affectionate when handled gently, and are one of the cleanest and most immaculate of pets.

I know many do not consider a mouse as a really clean animal. But misunderstanding of animals is usually due to our failure to see them as they really are. Many of us would rather cling to a prejudice than give credit where due. Anyone who has watched a mouse groom himself, from end to end, several times daily, is due for a surprise. These little fellows are really well groomed at all times, and all they need to remain so is clean shavings for the box, and clean food and water. They detest sloppy feed and quarters.

For real action, on a small scale, colored mice have all pets beat. A new generation is born 21 days after mating, compared with 30 days for rabbits and 65-72 days for covies. The young does are ready to mate at 6 to 8 weeks and litters may run from 4 to 10 or more.

Now the colors! All of the known colors in rabbits and covies are duplicated in mice—plus many attractive colors not known in other small animals. Each color is, in fancy mice, most delicately presented. My lilacs are a soft shade of pinkish, dove gray, a real pastel. The eyes are ruby. Then one of the prettiest of all is the golden yellow with ruby eyes. The young are golden buff for about 3 weeks, then gradually take on their intermediate coats, becoming brighter and richer up to maturity.

There are softly colored Silver Browns with cream throat and belly and dark eyes. English Red Belgian hares, chocolate of a very rich tone. Many pretty varieties of spotted mice, blue and white, red and white, chocolate and white, etc.

I am especially attracted to some mauve colored females with ruby eyes. They are very glossy blue-gray with a pinkish cast, darker than lilac mice.

One beige colored youngster, I will not try to describe the hue, just soft glossy beige with garnet eyes. A clear champagne silver male with lavender undercolor and amethyst eyes is soon to become a sire—mated to a mauve and cream female. Here is where I start my study of mouse genetics.

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### MEAT SUBSTITUTES

(Continued from page 22)

government-approved and contain sufficient animal protein and vitamins to provide really good nourishment for the pet.

There is one large packing company which maintains a laboratory manned by expert nutritionists where for 10 years the problem of supplying the best types of dog food has been studied. The food now offered is dehydrated. It comes in a paper box and needs only the addition of water to restore it to its original moist state which is quite palatable to both dogs and cats. This food, when rehydrated, looks like rich, red cylindrical pellets of chopped meat. It contains fresh meat by-products, soy flour, wheat, barley, edible bone, salt, and fish liver oils—all fortified with vitamins. It has been carefully prepared and has proven its worth in furnishing a balanced diet for pets. In the research kennels of the meat packing concern which makes it, 460 dogs have been raised on it and no other food. The dogs, of many different breeds, enjoy excellent health, and prove conclusively the value of this type of feeding.

If the dog or cat won't eat the new food right away, we repeat, add bits of food it does prefer to start with, gradually diminishing the amount of this until it becomes wholly accustomed to the new type.

According to Dr. L. D. Frederick, one of the country's outstanding experts on animal diseases, and Dr. H. E. Robinson, noted nutritionist and expert on animal diets, few dog owners until recent years worried about what their pets ate. Now most dog owners are aware that definite canine nutrition problems exist. Conscientious modern dog owners, say Drs. Frederick and Robinson, realizing that their pets lead more restricted lives due to several factors, feel obligated to arrange careful diets for their pets.

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## THE FASCINATION OF THE GOLDEN AND CINNAMON AGOUTIS

THIS week our "leading article" concerns two varieties of the Agouti group, the golden Agouti and the cinnamon or brown Agouti. It is written for us by our friend, Mr. F. A. Hignell. I would mention that the other varieties classed in this group are the grey or blue Agouti and the Chinchilla. The Agouti has sometimes been described as the "coat of many colours," the reason being that the variety forms the ground work for the production of various colours. Dr. Kerr has pointed out for us that the golden Agouti is really a cultivated mouse of the wild pattern. This, of course, is quite true, but it is by this cultivation that we have produced a coat which is so distinctive by the carrying of its rich golden colour with very definite ticking. I merely mention this from the judges' aspect. The Agouti must not be over-dark but must have the golden colour well pronounced.

"I am sure (says Mr. Hignell) that all breeders of Agoutis and Cinnamon will agree that for a fascinating hobby there can be so little to beat these varieties. Perhaps not so popular as they might be, although I cannot agree with many correspondents who say Agoutis lose their popularity because they resemble the wild mouse in colour. This is very far from correct, and, to my mind, very misleading. What can look better than Agouti of the proper shade with the sheen of coat not often seen in other varieties and with wonderful eyes standing out like beads. Surely its comparison with the wild mouse is like comparing a wild pony with a race-horse.

"One of the most interesting features of these breeds is the colour-mixing—i.e., Cinnamon, Agouti and Red—as from my experience the mating of one colour together does not bring satisfactory results. Hence comes in the red, but if this is used anything but carefully you will meet with light feet. Also make sure that your Red carries both good ears and tail. Reds often fail in these respects.

"To try to explain the breeding and blending of these colours would be a long and complicated job, but if it would be of any advantage to beginners I would offer the following as a guide. When purchasing stock always

get the best you can afford and of a reliable strain. If you need assistance in this respect I am sure our secretary will put you right. Always pay attention to undercolour and feet, which should, as far as possible, be the same colour as the rest of the body. Never breed with a mouse which does not carry good hindquarters and a good tail, which should be at least the length of the body.

"The question of numbers of young to rear with a doe is rather a problem as the colour of the young does not show up to the proper degree until the first moult. I usually keep four of the largest and destroy the rest, except when I wish to save the whole litter. In that case I use a foster. This foster should be a large doe and should have been proved to be a good mother. Always remove young

(Continued on page 66)

### A "Hand"

Michigan—Please put my ad in ALL-PETS, but first I want to give you a "hand" for putting out a great magazine. The last ad I put in for Poms and Manchesters sold everything I had to sell at that time. I like the articles Marie Lyons writes very much. My thanks to her.—  
Ray Wrisley.

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## FASCINATION OF AGOUTIS

(Continued from Page 62)

bucks at four to five weeks old. The does can be left a couple of weeks longer. Should any novice desire any information regarding the mixing of the colours I should be pleased to do my best to furnish it.

"I have often been asked what made

me take up mouse breeding as a hobby and why I took to Cinnamons. Well, the first mouse I had was given to me by a boy to whom I had given a rabbit. I took it that this was meant as a little appreciation. I took this mouse to our local show, but did not get a card. My friend, Jim Ellis, to whom I owe a lot of my success, gave his opinion and very kindly offered to start me off on proper lines. At that time I had my shed full of rabbits, but as interest increased I gradually reduced my rabbits, so that to-day I only have one doe, but close upon 200 mice, and Cinnamons still hold pride of place. Recently I have added more Agoutis than usual. To anyone interested in mice and doubtful of a breed to keep I would suggest a few pens of Agoutis. I would also like to appeal to breeders to support the guaranteed A.O.V. classes at all coming shows. By so doing appreciation will be shown and also it will be the means of keeping several of the most interesting varieties alive."

Mr. Ralph Blake recently wrote to me and said: "I have been most interested lately in the correspondence things on to my old friend, Mr. A. G. Beeston, who in my mouse days became interested in the subject and several times visited the late Walter Kilminster's mousery with me. The standardized varieties never appealed to him much, but the elusive Tricolour did, and he put much time and thought into the matter. He wrote me as follows: 'Thanks so much for the cuttings, it is very nice of you to remember my old mouse days and how I tried for so long a time for the three coloured ones. I am, of course, still deeply interested in the problem. If I could get some genuine stock at a nominal figure I would have another shot at it. I have read and re-read the articles, and, like the writers, deem it a terrific gamble, but still believe that some day someone will find a strain of Tricolours.'"

Mr. Beeston's address is "The Corner Bungalow," Kings Stag Sturminster. Newton Dorset, and Mr. Blake says perhaps his old friend of the last war, Mr. J. Durham, would like to get in touch with Mr. Beeston. Also probably others who are interested in the fascinating problem would like to write to Mr. Beeston. Mr. Blake concludes by saying that he hopes one day when accommodation permits that he will be able to be back with the long-tails, as it is such a grand hobby.—A. C. Jude, *Fur and Feather*

## SHAVINGS, HULLS OR GRASSES, GOOD LITTERS FOR MICE

When one thinks of buying bedding or litter for mice, one must remember that it must be absorbent and of such nature that the mice can make a nest of it if they desire to do so.

Probably the most widely used litter for mice is shavings—white pine, or any other soft wood. Cedar shavings mixed with other shavings, will help to keep down any odor that might come from the mice. Oak, maple and other hardwood shavings are not suitable because they do not absorb moisture very fast. Shavings are probably the cheapest of the litter.

Stays Dry is a fairly good bedding. You no doubt know that this is made from sugar cane. My experience with Stays Dry has shown that the mice are inclined to eat this bedding. Upon performing an autopsy of the mice, I found that pieces of fiber were protruding from the intestines of the mice. As far I could see, this did not seem to harm the mice to any great extent. Stays Dry is very absorbent bedding, but is quite expensive in some parts of the country.

Peanut hulls are very good for litter. Some large mouseries use peanut hulls instead of shavings because they are able to obtain them at a lower rate in certain parts of the country.

The best litter I have found is oat hulls, but unfortunately they are very hard to obtain in the east. In the mid-west oat hulls are plentiful and cost very little.

For the mice that are very nervous use hay such as June grass, for litter. The mice will very often make their nest in a litter of this kind. These mice should not be disturbed until their young are old enough to run around. Paper torn in small strips also can be used in the same manner as hay. Excelsior is good for this purpose also.

Grain hulls also make a good litter.

Peat Moss is also very good but is very expensive in most parts of the country.—*Frederick Jones, Jr.*

### NEWSPAPER AD LAUGHS

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