



This department is devoted to pets which do not otherwise have a special section in the magazine.

The Fancy Mouse

BY A. C. JUDE

FIFTH OF A SERIES

(Editor's Note: Prior articles in this series will be found in the January, February, March and June issues, 1950).

A description has been given of the varieties of the fancy mouse which are recognized by "The National Mouse Club" of Great Britain. With such a wide choice, the intending fancier may ask: "With which shall I begin?"

As with most animals, birds or fishes, some varieties are more involved in the breeding than others. Bearing this in mind, I would advise the intending mouse fancier to select from the "Self" or "Tan" sections, but to leave out the Red and the Cream, as these are difficult for the novice to tackle.

For the final choice I think the fancier is well advised to decide for himself. I think that often the interest is more lasting that way.

The chief point is that the fancier should specialize, and never at any time undertake more than he can comfortably manage at any stage. To do so, makes hard work of a hobby, and that will surely detract from the interest and pleasure.

Having decided on the variety there are two ways in which you may commence. The first is by purchasing a "trio." This means two does and a buck. The other way is to buy two (or three) does in kindle. In either case stipulate that the individuals are not too closely related, and that they are approximately 12 weeks old.

If you decide to start with the "trio", the three mice should be housed together until such time as the does are obviously in kindle. The buck should then be taken away, and

the two does be given separate boxes. If this is done as soon as the does show to be in young, they will have plenty of time to settle down before the litters are due, and there will be small chance of failure.

The period of gestation is approximately 21 days. It will probably be noticed at feeding time if the litters have been born. A careful note should be made of the date. It is best to leave the nest undisturbed for 3 days. After that time it may be carefully opened at the top, after having removed the mother to a nearby empty box. An average litter will be 8 or 9. Quite possibly there may be an odd small baby, or even a dead one. These should be removed. A day or two later a further inspection can be made, and this process can be continued at intervals to see that all is well. It is an advantage to reduce the litter by degrees, so that at the end of three weeks only three, or at the most, four babies remain. The actual number will depend on the progress of growth. Some mothers are better than others. The object of the reducing is to ensure well-grown stock. In reducing the litter, some chance has to be taken, especially with "self" colored or even "tan" mice, but with the "marked" varieties the markings begin to show in about 3 or 4 days, and so the quality can be gauged.

From the first litters, it is advisable to retain, say, two does and a buck from each litter. For the novice it may not be too easy to sex at birth, but soon after the first week, the young does will be showing the teats. It is then possible to compare the sex organs of the doe and buck. If

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REARING MEALWORMS

Mealworms are the larval forms of large black beetles belonging to the genus *Tenebrio*. As a rule they are pests of flour, grain and stored cereal products. However, the use of mealworms for bird food, fish bait, fish food and food for small mammals has created a demand for them.

Dealers in pets often sell mealworms although persons may easily raise these insects at home. These worms form an important part of the diet for insectivorous mammals, frogs, snakes and fishes. They may also supplement the diet of caged birds.

In order to raise mealworms an initial supply can be purchased from pet dealers or obtained from infested stored grain. First, a container should be built. This consists of a wooden box about eight inches deep, two feet long and eighteen inches wide. A lid should be made by using a thin sheet of zinc and perforating it with small holes for ventilation. The box is filled within two inches of the top with wheat bran to which is added a little Graham flour and commercial meat scraps. Since the worms enjoy moist foods thin pieces of raw fresh vegetables can be placed on a piece of board and laid on top of the bran. The bran should not become too moist, otherwise molds may develop and kill the mealworms.

The culture is started by introducing from 500 to 1000 larvae or beetles into the bran. This is usually done in the spring and as many boxes being used as required.

Once the culture has been started it is a simple matter to keep them going. Fresh bran should be added as needed.

Mealworms when fully grown are from 1 to 1¼ inches long. They are scavengers and are found in nature feeding on old damp grain. They are usually found in dark, damp places.

Mealworms usually spend the winter in the larval stage. Adult beetles emerge in the spring and early summer. The beetles only live 2 or 3 months. Rearing mealworms in the laboratory only requires about four months. The beetles lay white, oblong eggs. They hatch out in about a week and develop into mature mealworms. The mature larvae pupate and eventually emerge as adult beetles.

It Pays to Advertise Every Month in ALL-PETS. Best results that way, plus lower costs.

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the comparison is made every few days, the fancier will soon be able to sex at any age.

If it was decided to purchase two does in kindle, the does should be housed separately, and in every case the litter retained can remain with the respective mothers for 5 weeks. At that time the bucks must be removed, or there may easily be unwanted litters. It is better to place each buck in a separate box, which must have a label attached, on which should be noted the parentage and date of birth. An easy system to start with is to name the adult does "A" and "B", and the adult buck "No. 1". This procedure or something similar must be adopted throughout breeding operations.

The young does may remain with their mothers for a further week, and then the mothers should be removed for a week's rest, when they will be ready for re-mating.

If the "trio" was purchased for the start, the does may now be re-mated to the original buck, but if the start was made with two does in kindle, then a buck will have to be purchased for use to these does. Maybe the better way is to buy the two does in kindle, as the progeny will be unrelated, or only distantly so, and the buck in the case of the "trio" is not kept idle for several weeks.

When the youngsters from the original does are old enough to breed, which is normally 10 to 12 weeks for bucks, and 12 to 14 weeks for does, the buck from "A" doe may be mated to the does from "B" doe, and vice versa. This method can be worked out in all subsequent breeding, and if careful records are kept, and good selection of pairs has been made, a first class stud will soon result.

New Year Preparations

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each month brings the pet a surprise package from the pet shop—no two months find the same items contained therein. The pet owner pays either \$10, \$25 or \$50 yearly, for which twelve different packages are sent out. There's profit aplenty in this year-round merchandising package plan which has worked out well for a number of pet shops.

This, then, is a partial resume of what pet shops are doing to make the New Year more profitable and pleasurable. In addition, one pet shop will

this year have a local pet owner who has had wide experience with pets of all species on hand one afternoon weekly from three till six, to answer queries from pet owners — with no purchase necessary nor expected. People who get in the habit of coming in to a pet shop for advice, on a periodic basis, usually wind up by making purchases now and again, even though they be on the small side, financially.

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Details on page four.

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THE MART

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