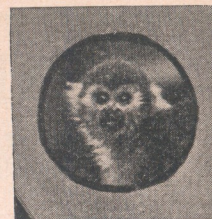




# Odd Pets



## Breeding Mice Outdoors

By H. DEMPSEY

Articles that I've read on the breeding of mice tend to make it a more or less complicated and tedious endeavor. On the contrary, mice are the hardiest and most easily raised of any small stock. You need not have a comprehensive knowledge of science nor a deep understanding of different scientific laws and theories in order to breed healthy and vigorous mice. Just good common sense, like we all have, is sufficient.

I've been breeding mice for several years and, with the permission of ALL-PETS MAGAZINE, will tell in very simple words my ways and methods of housing, feeding and breeding.

### Housing

As I write these words the temperature outside is 5 degrees below zero and my mice are out in the backyard in their apple, orange and plywood boxes. When the temperature is 100 degrees this summer they'll still be out in the backyard in the same boxes but under a shade.

I know from experience that mice do not require a certain degree of temperature in a heated building. I never have a sick mouse and they breed steadily the year around.

Nearly all of my mice are housed in apple boxes approximately 10 inches wide, 20 inches long and 10 inches deep. The door is hinged from the top and lifts up—and is covered with heavy roofing material. The side opening is made by boring a hole in each corner about 2 inches from the edge, and sawing out with a keyhole saw or with a sharp knife. Screen wire is used over the opening because it keeps flies out in summer. Inside I put a feed shelf, about four inches wide and 6 inches from the bottom, across one end. They'll climb the wire to get upon it. In an opposite corner, I put a 3 inch square shelf, 6 inches from the bottom, for the

water can. I use condensed milk cans, with the top cut off, for water. Bottles and tubes are okay, but I just never use them.

In winter put 4 or 5 inches of straw in the box and cover the side opening except for a small space for air and ventilation. The mice will make their nests in the straw and breed and thrive in sub-zero weather. Use common sense and keep the feed shelf and water can clean, but you don't have to scald and fumigate but once or twice a month.

One apple box as I've described will satisfactorily house 10 to 12 females and their young to weaning age.

### Feeding

Mice will eat most all grains and vegetables, but, after several years experience, I believe they do better on rolled oats and dog feed in pelleted form. I feed and water once a day, and this is done in the evening as mice do most of their eating at night. Feed just what they will clean up during the night so food won't lay on the feed board to become soiled. Mice also relish dry bread. If it's stale or moldy, it should be toasted in the oven first.

### Breeding

I keep 85 females and 15 males in a breeding box 3 ft. square and a foot deep.

When a female begins to show heavy with young, take her out of the breeding cage and put her in another box with females that were bred about the same time. Most males will kill new born mice and some females will if they don't have young in the same nest. I had 100 females to have young in one 3 by 3 foot box, and I weaned 492 babies from them. However, I advise you to keep not over 10 together, and these should have been bred about the same time. When the young are from 10 to 18 days old you

can easily distinguish the sexes by picking them up by the tail and looking at their stomachs. The teats on the females are plainly visible. All surplus males can be kept together. A little fighting will take place, but they'll soon settle down.

Mice are naturally clean and are amusing little pets. They require little time, feed and space. If common sense is used, they can easily and successfully be bred by anyone.

### New Year's Baby

The Philadelphia Zoo got off to a good start in 1946. The gibbon family, agile, tree-living apes from the Malay region, had a blessed event on New Year's Day—or at least the keepers think so.

As is customary, the Zoo was closed on January 1, to permit employees to spend the holiday with their families. Only a skeleton crew was on hand to feed and water the stock and to take care of other necessary chores. Keeper Julius Dages, of the Small Mammal House, left his building late in the forenoon of the 1st, and when he returned early on the morning of the 2nd he was surprised to find an infant gibbon clinging to the long black hair of its mother. Her name is Ruby and, whereas she seemed quite pleased with what had happened, her mate, George, paid no attention to his offspring.

The baby weighed only a few ounces at birth and still is almost all legs and arms. This is Ruby's fourth youngster, but only one other survived; it was sold to a private zoo in Florida when it was two years of age.

It is quite rare for gibbons to be born in captivity. A pair in the San Diego Zoo produced the first little one, but George and Ruby were the parents of the second one to be born in the United States.