

The Fancy Mouse

BY A. C. JUDE

FIRST OF A SERIES

An invitation to write a series of articles for "All-Pets", gave me much pleasure, and as President of the "National Mouse Club" of Great Britain, I take this opportunity to offer best wishes to all American fanciers.

The breeding and exhibiting of fancy mice in the United Kingdom ranks as one of the most popular sections of the great Fancy. This is understandable, for as a small livestock hobby the fancy mouse offers a number of advantages. The initial outlay is small, as are the upkeep No elaborate accommodation is needed, and relatively large numbers can be housed in small space. Feeding is cheap and easily prepared. The fact that mice breed quickly, and all the year round, is an added advantage, especially for those interested in exhibiting, or in the study of genetics and color inheritance.

These articles will be primarily for the novice who has, or is just about to purchase his first mice, and who wants to know how to keep them. The cultivation of small livestock as a hobby, creates a world-wide bond among fanciers, and many new friends will be made, so that no one entering the Fancy will ever regret such a

Fancy mice breed at an early age. and continue to do so prolifically all their lives. For those who wish, therefore, to go in for experimental breeding, this is a distinct advantage, as besides having plenty of material with which to work, they will only have a short wait for results. The results, of course, must largely depend on the study and trouble taken by the individual, but if the simple advice given in these articles is followed, endless pleasure will result, and it will be found that the keeping of fancy mice can be an all-round profitable hobby.

For the un-initiated the thought of fancy mice will conjure up visions of the efforts of small boys to keep smelly little animals in their bedrooms which are always getting loose and scaring the wits out of the female members of the household. It is true, of course, that mice could create a smell if the owner fails to look after them properly. This, however, can happen with all animals if they are not properly attended to, and in any case, it is the buck only that will give offence if cleanliness is not observed.

The ideal housing is some outdoor shed or brick building. The only matters needing attention are that the building must be damp-proof and free from all draughts. A good light is of course necessary so that the fancier may work and carry out inspection to the best advantage. These things, and a strict attention to absolute cleanliness will provide all that is necessary from the general housing point of view.

Fancy mice kept in the house should be cleaned out every day, but if a separate bulding is used, the whole box, with the exceptions of the corners, may be left for perhaps a week. But the corners of the box should have daily attention. This will result in dry atmosphere, and the prevention of any possible offensive smell.

Where an outdoor building is used, it is a good plan to fit a wire-netting door just inside the entrance door. This serves two purposes. First, it

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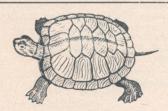
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permits the outer door to be left open during warm weather, for ventilation is of utmost importance, and secondly the wire netting door will keep out any stray cat or dog which would otherwise cause much havoc.

During very warm weather the boxes of mice should be placed as near the floor of the building as possible, and a little water may be sprinkled on the floor to keep the air buoyant.

The best type of breeding box is a quite simple wooden one. The best size for two does and a buck, or for a doe with her family, is 18" x 9" x 8" high. Smaller boxes are not advised, for mice are active little creatures, and need sufficient space to exercise in. Then again, a smaller box does not allow for good ventilation, with the result that condensation takes place to excess on the sides and lid. On no account should the inside of the box be painted. It is better to allow the bare wood to absorb what condensation there may be.

The front end of the box should have a rectangular piece cut away at the top. This should be about 5" long and 3" deep. The opening must be covered on the inside with perforated zinc. The lid of the box should be made so that it fits inside the box, and to prevent it falling in, nail two strips of wood to the lid, each two inches from the ends of the lid. The strips may be one inch square, and must overhang the lid and so rest on the sides of the box. The strips also allow stacking of boxes without loss of ventilation. The lid should have a hole cut away in the middle about 6" x 4" which, too, must be covered on the inside with perforated zinc.

The box is now complete except that a partition must be placed 4" from the back of the box for nesting. The partition must reach right across the width of the box, and be about 3½" high. If possible, arrange that the partition is removable, as this will help to make a good job at cleaning-out time. A good layer of sawdust, and a supply of clean sweet meadow hay completes the breeding box.

An Open Letter

(Continued from Page 74)

Next month I want to continue my open letter to all those who are interested in the pet business by discussing some of the other questions you have asked. I will attempt to cover: How much money is needed to start a pet shop, where to buy good pets wholesale and other such things that I feel will be of general interest.

Until next month, I remain Yours very truly,

J. B. Roberts, Jr.

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