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Rabbits

CAVIES -- HAMSTERS



THE GOLDEN HAMSTER

By DONALD H. DeMEULES

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It was in the year 1839 that G.R. Waterhouse described and named a new rodent before the Zoological Society of London. He named this new animal *Cricetus, Auratus*, the Golden Hamster, because of its "Beautiful yellow brown coat." Until recently only two examples of the Golden Hamster were known, the skin and skull of a female from which Waterhouse made his original description, and a second specimen, also a female, preserved in alcohol at the Beirut Museum in Beirut.

In 1884 H. B. Tristram, in his work titled the "Fauna and Flora of Palestine," made the following note in regard to the hamster: "I have frequently seen a large light colored hamster about bushes, and making its escape from wild palms, but I never secured it. It cannot be mistaken for the much smaller *C. Phoeus*, and can be none other than this species first described from Aleppo, and well known from Syria. I have seen specimens in the museum at Beirut." However, according to later authors he was probably mistaken and saw another species of hamster *C. Raddie Brandti*.

First in Captivity

It was not until April 12, 1930 that new specimens were found. They were obtained by I. Aharoni of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem while on a zoological expedition into Northern Syria. One adult female and her twelve young were found in a burrow two and a half meters (8 feet) below the surface of the ground. The young hamsters, about three centimeters long, were raised on a diet of meat. Towards the end of July they were brought to Jerusalem and placed on a diet of vegetables and milk. On August 18, 1930 the first litter to be born in captivity appeared.

Because of its small size and susceptibility to various diseases, it soon became a popular laboratory animal. In 1931 Dr. S. Adler brought a few hamsters to England where they were bred and carefully observed by Prof. E. Hindle of the National Institute for Medical Research.

The golden Hamster has been sent to the following countries to date: England, France, Tunis, Algiers, Egypt, America, and the Sudan. They have survived everywhere except in the Sudan.

Brought to States

It was not until May of 1938 that the hamster arrived in the United States. They were sent to the Rockefeller Foundation in New York City. In July 1938 another shipment of thirteen animals were sent from Palestine to the Western Reserve University in Cleveland. Most, if not all, of the hamsters in the United States today are descendants of the Cleveland stock. What is more interesting, though, is the fact that all of the golden hamsters in the world that are in captivity are descendants from the original thirteen found near Aleppo in 1930. No new wild specimens have been found to date.

Smaller in Size

The description of the golden hamster as given by Bruce and Hindle, in "Golden Hamster, Notes on its Breeding and Growth," is as follows: "The Golden Hamster is smaller than the common European Hamster, a full grown female rarely exceeding a length of seven inches, and has a deep golden-brown color, but towards the roots the hairs are dark grey. The fur is short, soft, and smooth. The ventral surface is very light grey, with white patches. The ears are large, grey, and almost naked, with a few golden-brown hairs on the outer surface. The eyes are large and black. The skin is extremely loose, to such an extent that folds at least two inches deep can be pulled out from any part of the trunk. The short stumpy tail, and especially the feet, are lighter in color than the rest of the body. The cheek-pouches are well developed and can hold a surprisingly large amount of food. According to B. Aharoni (1932) these hamsters live in deep burrows which they make in grain fields. Although in nature they are presumably herbivorous, in captivity they are omnivorous, and in addition to grain, will feed on roots, nuts, and bread

(Continued on page 59)

SUCCESSFUL HAMSTER RAISING

By AL HAYNER
(All Rights Reserved)

This is the third of a series of short articles on the raising of Golden Hamsters.

From the average beginner's viewpoint, this article on breeding and handling of Hamsters is, no doubt, more important than the preceding articles which have appeared in this magazine. It is equally important but no more so than the others, which have been printed or will be printed.

Adult females should be kept in individual cages similar to those described in the first article of this series. Adult males may be kept together and also young stock after the sexes have been separated. The males should be handled frequently. Adult female Hamsters can be easily changed from cage to cage by the use of a glass jar or a number two and one-half tin can.

Breeding Hamsters

When a female Golden Hamster is to be bred, she should be placed in the male's cage. If she accepts service, leave them together for about ten minutes, but if they fight, remove the female and try again in a day or two; or, she may be left with the male even though they fight, until she shows size. The fighting they do is seldom serious. The sexual cycle is four to five days. Another method of breeding is by colonies. Two or three males, which have been raised together, are kept in a large cage as studs. When females are to be bred, they are placed in the breeding cage (as many as five at a time) and left until they show size and then removed to individual cages. This method has one drawback. You are unable to keep individual records of production on your herd.

Average Litter

The gestation period is sixteen days. The average litter is between seven and eight, although I have weaned litters with as many as twelve. The young may be weaned when they are between 18 and 21 days old. If females are seen killing the young, or if the young are at least fourteen days old, they should be removed from the cage at once. With a little extra attention, they will all live.

After weaning, the females are rested four to six days before being bred again. Female Golden Hamsters can be bred for the first time when they are between 35 and 40 days old. Five or six litters are all a good female will produce during her sexual life. If a female will breed after six litters, the litters will be small or the female will kill all the young. It is better to replace these animals with younger breeding stock.

Prevent Cannibalism

When female Hamsters have their

young, a number of things must be taken into consideration to prevent cannibalism. The source of light must be placed so that the nest remains in the dark. Heat should be constant, 55 to 70 degrees fahrenheit. Adult Hamsters can stand considerable cold, but the young are naked when born, and they need the extra heat. Strange noises such as loud voices should be avoided. High humidity is desirable. Cage doors should be opened as few times as possible to prevent disturbing the mother. (REFER TO ARTICLE ONE IN THIS MAGAZINE).

—o—

CAVY PERSONALITIES

By FRANK C. STUART

Just as sure as Cavies differ in color and type so do they differ in their personalities, likes and dislikes. The Cavy has a vivid and real personality and it is a pleasing one.

During my years of raising Cavies (and they have been enjoyable ones) I have run across many individual personality quirks. For instance I have in my caviary now a broken colored English Cavy boar who simply and flatly refuses to spend his days in a hutch. He much prefers the care-free life of running about the premises and I'm sure his theme song must be "Don't Fence Me In."

Sometimes I find him sitting on the lawn, his jaws rhythmically stowing away the grass. Other times he may be seen invading the chicken coop and busily devouring all the hen scratch to his heart's content.

Now please don't get me wrong. General Rufus does not become mean or contrary when placed in a hutch for he is the most gentle and playful fellow that you'd ever want to meet and the pet of all the kids in the neighborhood, but he lets me know in his own cavy way that he much prefers the open spaces.

Then there are those little aristocrats who almost take the hutch door down with them at mealtime while others prefer to stay a little behind

(Continued on page 66)

GOLDEN HAMSTER

(Continued from page 58)

and meat, etc., and will carry off and store almost any portable object.

"Mr. J. L. Chaworth-Musters has kindly furnished us with information on the present systematic position of this species. The genus *Mesocricetus* was created to include a group of closely related hamsters from Armenia, the Caucasus, and Bulgaria, differing from the true hamsters (*Cricetus*) of Central and Eastern Europe in their smaller size, shorter tail, and larger number of mammae. As a result of recent work, however, *Mesocricetus* is now regarded as only a subgenus of *Cricetus*. When more material is available, *C. Auratus* may come to be regarded as only a geographical race of the Caucasian *C. Raddei* Nehring (*Mesocricetus Nigificans* Auct.,) for at present it seems to be distinguished only by its brighter golden-brown color."

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BIRDS AND ANIMALS

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SUCCESSFUL HAMSTER RAISING

(Continued from page 59)

the gang.

White Peruvian Cavies

I'll never forget the time I bought a pair of White Peruvian cavies from that grand breeder in Ohio, Gus Pullins. When the express truck arrived, I hastily opened the crate to view the little new comers. Yes, they were beautiful Peruvians. The boar preferred to stay huddled up in the corner of the crate as Cavies often do after a strenuous, excited trip to new surroundings, but the sow, oh! what a personality she had.

The moment the boards were removed from the front of the crate she thrust her head through the opening and began examining her new environment including me and then with a bound landed on the living room rug and began scrutinizing the room. An example of two entirely different personalities.

Types of Food

Then there are those Cavies who are simply crazy about certain types of food, while others do not care for that type of a feast in the least. My Cavies relish lettuce and carrot tops while just the other day I talked with a fellow breeder who said that his Cavies did not care for carrot tops and lettuce in the least. The peculiar thing is that I sold this breeder his stock.

I know and have heard of many other interesting Cavy personalities and I'll bet that you have also. This display of individualism is what removes the care of Cavies from one of drudgery to one of continuous surprises.

Elect New Officers

The American Cavy Breeders Association has recently reached a new high in membership, four hundred members. Within the near future they hope to have five hundred members.

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board of governors, include: J. E. Love, chairman; Walter E. Scott, vice-chairman; and Walter S. Kirshner, secretary-treasurer. This group will hold office until January, 1946.

The organization is putting out a guide book at the present time and hopes to have it completed no later than September. The book will be dis-

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