

First step in starting an aquarium is a careful cleansing of the tank with warm salt-water. Soap or soap substitutes should not be used.

Mice Need Dryness, Warmth

By Frederick Jones, Jr.

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 nb

MANY PEOPLE have asked if it is all right to keep mice in the cellar, garage or shed. My answer has always been "yes," providing the place is dry and can be heated and kept at a temperature of at least 70 degrees, and not over 80 degrees at any time.

The place should not be drafty, for drafts can chill the mice and they will become sick. They will get colds and may develop pneumonia if the temperature drops very much below 70 degrees. This is very dangerous to the mice—especially the pregnant ones.

On the other hand, if the temperature rises much above 85 degrees it will probably kill all the pregnant females. In either or both cases; that is, if the temperature either rises or falls, if the mice don't die, their resistance becomes very low, and they are therefore susceptible to disease.

Common Disease

One of the most common of these diseases is called chattering. There seem to be two kinds of chattering—mild and serious. Mild chattering is a cold in the nose and throat of the mouse which causes the mouse to make a clicking sound with his teeth, because he finds it difficult to breathe. The nasal passages of the mouse become full of mucus. If one mouse in the box gets this chattering and loses some of the mucus on the feed hopper or dish or watering device, another mouse will pick up some of the mucus, and thereby get the chattering. Soon the whole box is full of chattering mice.

Some of the mice continue to produce even though they are sick, but some mice don't produce until they get over this mild chattering. If you perform an autopsy on one of the mice dead of chattering, you will find infected lungs.

In the serious chattering, the mice get the disease the same way as in the mild case. The mice chatter the same, but do not stay in good condition. They get thin and sit around in the box hunched up. Their hair gets ruffled. Their nose runs and the eyes are usually watery and sometimes matter up. They stop having young and what young they may have usually develop chattering too. The mice

usually die when they get this serious case of chattering.

There is still a lot of research work to be done on this disease, but in my opinion the mild chattering is a form of a cold and the serious chattering is a form of pneumonia.

Old Superstition

There is one question that I am asked many times—at least once a week. "How can I get a white mouse or rat and where can I keep him so that it will keep the wild mice and rats away." I don't know where this idea originated, but I do know that I too heard it when I was a small boy and believed it for many years after I grew up. It seems that most of the old timers still think it's true.

The truth of the matter is, however, that wild mice will breed very well with white mice if given the chance, and their offspring are very prolific. So how is it possible to get rid of wild mice by using this method. Their offsprings are very wild, in fact, just as wild as the regular wild mice. Of course some of the second generation of the wild and white mice will produce probably one white mouse, but very likely most of the mice will be of the wild color which is usually known as agouti.

The same is true of rats—white and wild rats breed very well. Let's start a campaign whereby children will never be taught to believe such fantastic tales. Some people have gone as far as to try out this scheme, and as a result became overrun with mice and rats.

—o—

CHUCK RETURNS HOME

Believe it or not, a groundhog with a homing instinct has been discovered. Up to now groundhogs were only supposed to be weather prognosticators—who minded their own business underground, except on the second of February each year when they emerged. That's why Chuck is so unusual.

When he was a baby, Chuck was found by Arthur Stillman of Somerton, Pennsylvania. The little groundhog made an ideal pet for the past year, but as he grew bigger he became grouchy and would bite the hands that fed him. So it was decided that he would be better off leading a wild, free life. Arthur carried him to a woods a couple of miles away and released him.

A short time later the groundhog was taken five miles away—in a car. A week went by and the Stillmans believed they had at last gotten rid of him, when—yes, you guessed it—he appeared. Now he is to be taken 10 miles away—to the Philadelphia Zoo.

LEGENDARY TROGON

Termed by some as the most beautiful of American birds is the green trogon (*Pharomacrus mocinno*) known by the Guatemalan natives as the Quetzal. The bird is shown on the shield of Guatemala. Iridescent green colors its crested head and body, somewhat larger than a sparrow's, the underparts and breasts are crimson and the wings black overhung by long plummy coverts.

More striking than these beautiful colors, however, is its tail of greenish-blue, about 10 inches long, with gleaming feathers curved in sword-like appearance.

According to Aztec legend the trogon belonged to Quetzalcoatl, one of their gods.

Surface Feeders

Surface-feeding ducks usually ride high in the water and obtain most of their food in shallows. Unless wounded, the adults seldom dive.

Diving ducks ordinarily ride lower in the water and are capable of submerging for 30 or 40 seconds at a time. They obtain much of their food on or near the bottom. Surface-feeding ducks include the black duck, blue-winged teal, and wood ducks; the divers are the goldeneye, bufflehead, and ring-necked duck.

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