

Mice

as
pets

by *Malcolm Davis*



The variety, housing, feeding, care and maintenance of mice as pets is detailed by Mr. Davis. Fancy mice include such rarities as Dutch Mice and the attractive Japanese Waltzing Mouse. Simple feedings involve one type of laboratory-type feeding pellet; unique arrangement of water supply necessitates only a periodic refilling and checking; an ideal pet for enthusiasts so inclined, writes the author.

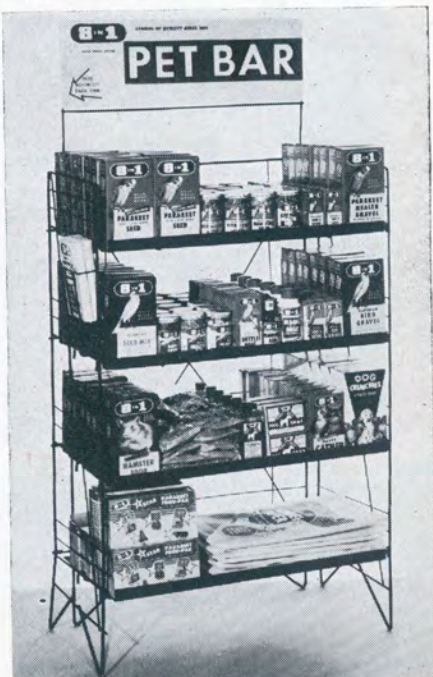
Our introduction to the mouse probably occurred during our early years. Our mothers complained of the presence of mice in the pantry, kitchen and linen closet. These small rodents, members of the family Muridae, include a wide variety of individuals. They are generally small animals with lower incisors compressed; no premolars; molars rooted or rootless; and the tail generally nearly naked and scaly. Literature speaks of them as a feeble folk, comparatively insignificant in size and

strength, holding their own in legions against a host of natural enemies, rapacious beasts and birds.

fancy mice

Mice are frequently kept as pets. Some may not like these easily maintained rodents, it is a matter of taste. Fancy mice are sold as pets, and numerous varieties are offered and all are attractive. This list of varieties is as broad in scope as your imagination: from White to

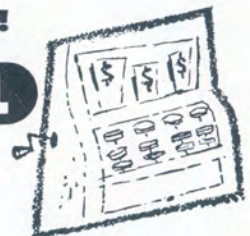
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Continued

Mice

Black to Red to Spotted to Hairless, and many varieties which can be found between these groupings.

Prices for mice range from one to four dollars a pair and include such rarities as Dutch mice and the most attractive Japanese Waltzing mouse. Another variety is also amusing — the Shaker variety — which shakes its head continuously, this variety is also available in various colors.

The Waltzing mice were developed by the Japanese. Their organs of equilibrium, known as the semi-circular canals, are defective, thus causing the rodents to waltz in circles and half-circles. These mice are attractive and fascinating to observe. It is interesting to the pet keeper to know the origin of the animals he takes care of.

The White mouse which is a common pet and also used extensively in laboratories was developed from the house mouse, *Mus Musculus*. This little rodent is a familiar animal, for it is found over the entire United States and in all parts of the world that is inhabited by man. It prefers to be in or near houses, much to the dislike of the housewife.

The following is an account of the care and management of mice as pets. It is a method I used not many years ago when I bred them for pleasure. You can do the same with a minimum of effort.

**the
cage**

I obtained a cage made of hardware cloth, one-eighth inch mesh, twelve by twelve by eight inches square. The bottom of the cage was made of galvanized material. One end had a door just large enough for my hand to enter. Upon the floor of the cage I spread saw dust, a thin layer. At one end I attached a small cardboard box with the dimensions of four by four by four inches, at the end of which

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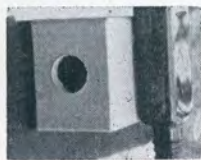
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there was a circular hole two inches in diameter. This was used as a nest in which the female reared her young. It would be desirable to insert a small tree branch in the cage, for the rodents delight in playing upon such an object. Newspapers torn in scraps, is preferred material in which the mice may sleep and make their nests. Into a cage of this size I introduced three females and one male.



Laboratory mouse pellets can be fed or grains (top). Photograph in the left column of this page shows an ideal mouse cage — they enjoy the exercise wheel. Photos by Louise Van der Meid.



A splendid method for watering mice is by a laboratory-type water bottle assembly, which consists of a bottle containing a rubber cork into which has been inserted a

small bent metal tube. This can be hung on the outside of the cage with the tube extending into the cage through the mesh. By this arrangement the mice will be able to drink and not soil the water or their cage.

food

In regard to food I used a laboratory mouse pellet. This is a complete diet in the form of pellets and can be obtained at most pet retail outlets. If so desired, you may feed other foods, for a mouse is an omnivorous creature.

young

When it is evident that the female is with young she should be removed or better still, remove the males to another similar abode. This will leave the

mother to assume the duties of motherhood without interference. The period of gestation is 19 to 20 days. The young number an average of six to a litter, and are born hairless and blind. In color they resemble red cherries.

Cleanliness should be maintained at all times. Clean your pets' cage once a day. Occasionally remove the mice and disinfect their living quarters. A pine oil disinfectant will tend to provide a clean smelling mouse cage. Mice thrive in a room temperature environment, and they are hardy creatures. If the mouse owner desires to be absent for several days, it is only necessary to fill the water bottle and put into the enclosure an abundance of food. ★



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