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Small Animals

Food for Fancy Mice and Rats

By S. P. HOLMAN

BECAUSE of the many inquiries I receive in regard to the proper diet for fancy rats and mice, the following notes may be of interest to the many breeders of these interesting little animals.

I have never advocated or used any diet which included wet feed. I realize that many breeders adhere to milk, or bread and milk, believing it a necessity their stock cannot do without. To them I can only say "All well and good, if you enjoy the extra work it makes". Where quantity production of quality stock is the aim, as it always should be, the less time devoted to feeding, the more there is available for the many other details.

For the past several years I have used a system which calls for grain, dog biscuit, bread and greens. If I thought there was a better diet, I would use it, as nothing is more important than proper food.

I use approximately fifty per cent oatmeal (rolled oats). The balance

of the grain ration being the "scratch feed" used for poultry. As the tops of my cages are ¼-inch mesh wire. I use the "intermediate" size of grain so the cages do not have to be opened when feeding. The grain is simply placed on the top of the cage and the animals do the rest. By feeding only as much as will be consumed within a few minutes, none is wasted by becoming mixed with the sawdust on the bottom of the cages.

As rats and mice should have food of some kind constantly available, I use a balanced ration dog biscuit wired to the inside of the cage, which eaten "between meals".

For a "pep" ration, I find none better than that suggested by Mr. Paul Seifert. A limited diet of this mixture will do wonders in a short time. It consists of

Oats (Dry Measure)	32 oz.
Caanry Seed (Dry Measure)	16 oz.
White Millet (Dry Measure)	12 oz.

If mice are a bit run down or off their feed, equal parts of hemp and linseed mixed with equal parts of the above staple mixture makes a fine tonic and will soon restore them to normal vigor. Too much of this food, however, will cause them to become much too fat. Under ordinary conditions one feeding a week will be sufficient.

Dr. Clyde E. Keeler in his book "The Laboratory Mouse", recommends the following formula:

240 parts rolled oats
30 parts powdered skim milk
8 parts cod-liver oil
1 part salt

This is in addition to the dog biscuit which are always kept in the cages in the murarium at Bussey Institution. It is evident that this is a successful system as I have seen hundreds of fine animals there, all of which seemed in the best of condition.

L. A. Maynard, in Science, Volume 71, page 192, lists a "diet for stock rats" in part by weight,

Ground malted barley	10
Linseed-oil meal	15
Wheat red-dog flour	22
Dried skim milk	15
Oat flour	15
Yellow corn meal	20
Steam bone meal	1
Ground limestone	1
Salt	1

I see no reason why it could not be used for mice also, although I have never tried it, as it is a finely ground food and would require the use of feeding dishes or other form of feeder.

Using any of the diet I have outlined, with a little dry bread and greens two or three times a week, no one should have any difficulty with their stock as far as food is concerned. In regard to green food, a few lines from my booklet "Fancy Rats and Mice, for pets and profit" will complete the story.

"They (the mice) are especially fond of lettuce but will eat cabbage leaves, carrot tops, beet tops, grass, cut or ground alfalfa. Wilted foods should not be fed. I have several times lost numbers of choice stock by feeding greens that evidently were too old."

In the past I have fed my stock once only each day, just after dark. Recently I have been feeding greens or a small piec of dry bread about nine o'clock in the morning and I find the little animals seem to enjoy this extra feeding very much, after which they retire to the nest for the balance of the day. Needless to mention, I keep water constantly available, using a semi-automatic system.

Cavy Show

The cavy show held with the Montgomery County Fair at Hatfield, Pa., Sept. 2-7, in which 228 cavies were exhibited, was a success. "Dad" Eastblack was judge.

The G. G. Shepherd and the Fox Peruvian caviaries captured the lion's share of the prizes, with the following being close behind: Baum, E. B. Schultz and J. R. Detweiler.

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