



Small Animals

Short Eared Mice

By S. P. HOLMAN

AMONG the numerous oddities in the world of fancy mice, the pretty little aristocrats with the short ears undoubtedly rank first in attractiveness. Contrary to general opinion, they are not the product of mutilation but are a natural mutation from the normal long eared type, first discovered in 1921, at Granby, Massachusetts.

I spent a most enjoyable week with Miss Lathrop in 1915, among whose stock, then numbering some twenty thousand. Miss Lynch later noticed a mouse with peculiar ears and some variations from the usual skull shape. Miss Lynch says, in her report* on this type of mouse, "The mutation—consists in a noticeable difference in the size of the ear. The pina is about one-half as long as that of the normal ear and usually one or two millimeters less broad but the position in which it is held lying close to the head makes it appear smaller than it actually is. In outline it is less regularly curved than the normal, a flattening near the tip of the ear and one in the outer margin being fairly constant features. It is usually thick and rather fleshy in appearance. The distribution of hair on the surface of the ear is similar to the normal".

By careful breeding from this one abnormal mouse came the many varieties of short ears now known to the fancy. As the character, short ears, behaves as a simple Mendelian recessive it can be combined with all varieties and types of fancy mice. This produces in some instances very peculiar individuals, for example, short eared hairless waltzers, or short eared, pink eyed, spotted bent tailed mice. The production of these bizarre combinations furnishes an almost unlimited field for experimental matings for those who will remember that "like produces like".

In working with any recessive character all that is necessary is to mate the mutant individual with the nor-

mal type selected for the wanted new combination. Then breed the first generation young, brother to sister. Recessives will be produced in the ratio of one to three normals. Of these three latter type, two will carry the recessive character while one will be a pure bred normal and of no value to the experimenter. Which is what can only be determined by a back cross to the parent stock. Recessives bred to each other will breed true, thus establishing new varieties. This experimental breeding is what keeps a true fancier riding his hobby.

**The American Naturalist*, September-October, 1921.

Smart Rats

According to a dispatch from Paris, if rats could be given intelligence tests, they would rate higher than the average man. At least that's what the director of the Museum of Natural History at Le Havre believes.

"Rats outwit man at every turn," declared Dr. Adrian Loir, "and ordinary human efforts to destroy them only increases the breed. The best trapping methods merely encourages polygamous habits, since traps catch the males that roam while the females stay with the young."

Cats are the best means of combating rats, Dr. Loir believes.

Incidentally, rats (the uncontrolled kind—we don't want to take a slam at the fancy rat!) have played an important part in the history of man. A book was written on the subject.

Nutria Habits

AS a rule the nutria is rather a shy animal and very suspicious of strangers. However, once he gets accustomed to a person attending and feeding him, he becomes very tame and docile and eats out of his keeper's hand. He can be stroked and made a fuss of. During the day he seldom comes out except at his regular feeding hour.

The best way to get hold of a nutria is to catch the end of his tail and by slowly lifting him up supporting his body with a board, or one's arm, he can be easily handled.

As a rule nutrias are not vicious animals and only bite in self-defense when attacked or when they believe themselves in danger. A deep grunting shows the satisfaction of the animal and a high squeaking their displeasure. If they get very cross they grind their teeth and then they are better left alone as their bites can make very severe wounds, and can do a lot of damage. They easily get accustomed to certain feeding hours and will wait for their attendant and come to him to take their food. When pairing nutrias for breeding, they will have to be carefully watched; if they take to each other and if too much fighting takes place, they will have to be separated and another mate be tried.—*Bruno Schoemann*.

Pet Education

Northwestern University at Evanston, Ill., is known as a sort of pet center. On its fair campus we frequently see wild rabbits. Nearby a colony of mink was recently found. Students make pets of the squirrels.

The other day, someone noticed a lovely furred animal, which was all black, save for a white streak running down its back and tail. Some lovely co-eds wanted to make a pet of it, but alas! the animal emitted a frightful odor.

The city police chief is trying to capture the ungrateful thing.

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