



Fancy mice pictured from left to right: Blue, Cream, and Black.

Fancy Mice

a one-ounce tale of success

by Robert J. Wyndham

Pet mice are winning friends by the day. Small wonder: they are clean, quiet, hardy and easily tamed. On top of all this, they are inexpensive to buy, to feed and to house and need so little room. A fully grown adult weighs less than an ounce; all three inches of it including another three inches of tail.

Their graceful tails help in climbing, when you keep them in a cage. Alert and intelligent, their pointed snouts are all the time sniffing around scouting for excitement and adventure. The tiny upright ears are always ready to take in alarming sounds. They are fun to breed and the kids go wild over them.

What adds interest to this hobby is that there are not less than seventy varieties of fancy mice available, some of which are rare. The White Swiss with its ruby-red eyes is an old-timer and still a favorite. Popular varieties are among others the Creams, Blues, Dove, Sable, Chocolate, Champagne, Black and Blue Dutch marked mice, Fawn, Lilac, Mahogany, Yellow, Silver and mix-

tures of these colors. Then there are the unusual varieties like black-eyed Tan, pink-eyed Reds, Chinchilla and Pearl. The short-eared mice (do they look funny!) come in all colors. For those who want rare specimens, hairless mice, Angoras and wooley coated mice are available. Even mice with wavy fur can be had. **In a class by themselves are the waltzing mice, that come in a Japanese and an English variety. These mice move about in a way that makes you think they are trying to waltz. An oddity are the shaker mice. They shake their little heads continuously.**

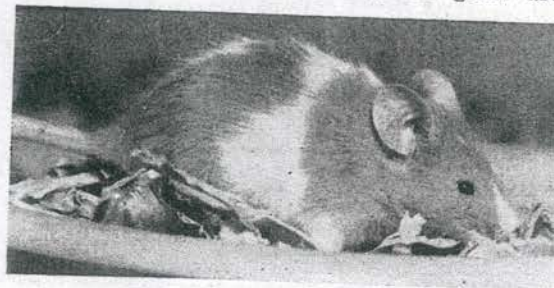
Recently a movie producer was scouting around for 150 tame mice to star in a prehistoric motion picture. Mice are easy to tame and giving them favorite snacks as rewards, encourages their education. They'll try to do almost anything for a tiny piece of cracker with peanut butter on it. But for their regular fare hamster mix, available in pet shops, is best. Occasionally, for variety, a small amount of rolled oats, some hay or some freshly cut grass are

appreciated. Any greens fed to them should be perfectly dry to avoid intestinal trouble. And don't forget mice have tiny stomachs, so please don't overfeed. A dandelion flower fed once in a while means a red letter day for your pets.

Water should be available at all times. To prevent contamination and sickness, install in their cage or box a small watering bottle. A special size for mouse cages is available.

You could keep mice in any cage. But they are better housed, especially if you want to breed them, in unpainted wooden boxes of simple design. A handy size is 9 x 16 inches and six inches deep, give or take a few inches. At one end of the box cut away at the top a piece of three by five inches and cover it on the inside with a piece of hardware cloth. The cover should have a window of about six by eight inches in the center, also covered by hardware cloth on the inside. Be sure to secure the cover with a few hooks.

If you want to breed your mice (and who wouldn't) then a partition is needed to provide a nesting place. This partition should be three inches high, the full width of the box, and nailed in place about four inches from the back end. If you are handy and can install this partition so that it is movable, your cleaning job will be easier. It is best to cover the floor with sawdust and put some



Photograph at right shows a banded or spotted mouse

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Mice

hay in the nesting compartment.

To house growing mice somewhat larger boxes are better. The true-blood mouse fancier always keeps a few extra boxes handy. It is wise to scrub boxes at regular intervals with a disinfectant. Overcrowding, one of the most common mistakes, is bound to cause trouble. Mice feel their best where extremes of temperatures are



Also available to fanciers is the curly mouse

avoided. So never place your boxes where direct sunshine could hit them.

Though mice are easy to breed, it is good to keep some points in mind for the best results. First it is necessary to be able to tell the boys from the girls. The males show a little swelling at the base of their tails: this is their sexual organ. The space between it and the anus is somewhat larger than in the female. Then when the females are two weeks old the teats show. Females can be bred when 12 to 14 weeks old, the males when 10 to 12 weeks old. The females can produce until they are fifteen months old. The gestation period is about three weeks. Litters number from six to eight babies, but litters of fifteen are on record.

When a pair of mice are put together in a box, it is usually love at first sight. Still it is advisable to keep an eye on them for a while. If there are any signs of scrappiness, place them in separate boxes, but so close that they can get acquainted. Or rig up an arrangement where they are separated by a glass window. After a few days they can be brought together again and the chances are they will get along fine. Mice, during their breeding period, tend to be nervous, so don't disturb

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them for two weeks. Of course, food and water should be supplied, but limit cleanings of their box to a minimum, say in front only.

After fifteen days carefully pick up the female to see if her abdomen shows the telltale plumpness. If so, remove the male. If you really want to go for it, one male with three or even four females can be put together. When the females are pregnant, each should be placed in a box of her own.

The babies, when born, weigh less than a quarter of an ounce. Their eyes are still closed but the irises of the eyes are visible through the closed eyelids. They are hairless and pink. The ears are attached to the cheeks and the tiny feet are still undeveloped. But they grow at an amazing rate and in three days the ears detach themselves from the face and fur starts to cover the skin. The arrival of the litter will probably be noticed at feeding time, when the young mother does not leave the nest. It is best to leave the nest alone for three days. Then inspect it to see if there are any dead baby mice.

When twelve days old the babies grow teeth and start taking soft solid food, like bread soaked in milk. When two weeks old they can use their feet, their eyes are open then and their fur is fully developed. At the age of one month their easy life is over and they should be weaned. Then they can eat adult food and the boys should be separated from the girls. If you want more mice, the mother should be given one week's rest, before mating her again.

American mouse fanciers - they call them mousers - have organized The American Mouse Club (Secr. Richard Pfarr, 8614 Spohn Drive, Fontana, California) so that they can exhibit their prize mice in competition at annual shows. *



Cats

Motherly love knows no bounds. A remarkable story comes from Massachusetts. A mother cat is nursing two Dachshund puppies along with her litter of five . . . Curiously, the cat gives the puppies care equal to her own offspring. (All-Pets, Sept., 1935)

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