

“The unmentionable”  
 Yet it is intelligent.

# PART FOUR

## THE BRIEF REVIVAL

### 1957-1969

"Very little has been heard about rats for the last 20 or 30 years... I think it worth while that the public should know something about the Fancy Rat."

- D. Rayfield - "The Unmentionable", 'Fur & Feather' 4th. April 1957

"We have heard a lot lately about the Fancy Mouse, but what about it's large relative the Fancy Rat? This animal has fascinated me since I first kept them."

- R.G Phillips - "The Friendly One", 'Fur & Feather' 19th. April 1962

P A R T 4  
THE BRIEF REVIVAL  
(1957 - 1969)

1957 could have been a very bleak year for the Fancy Rat when the N.M.C dropped all references to "Rat" from it's rules, thus making no avenue at all for the exhibition of Fancy Rats. However, the London and Southern Counties Mouse Club reinstated classes for Fancy Rats owing to strong persuasion from some Fanciers from the South Coast of England, namely Messrs Edwin Gay, D. Rayfield and Mrs. J. Curzon. These go-ahead Fanciers were not just content to breed Fancy Rats - they wanted to exhibit them as well. As Mr. Gay lived in the Portsmouth area he was probably better able than anyone else to convince the City of Portsmouth Fanciers Society Committee that it would be a very good idea to include classes at their prestigious summer show that August. This they agreed to and Mr. Rayfield proudly proclaimed this fact in an excellent article on the Fancy Rat in the issue of 'F & F' dated 4th. April 1957 and entitled, very aptly, "The Unmentionable". The article was concluded in the following week's issue. The closing paragraphs related to 'Exhibition Rats' and it was then that the first, tentative 'General Conformation' of a Fancy Rat for so many years was laid down, followed by Mr. Gay's address should anyone require further information on the Fancy Rat. When the Portsmouth show at last came round, a grand total of thirty two Rats were exhibited and this was mentioned proudly in the show report in the issue of 30th. August, with a photograph of two local 'bathing beauties' holding some Rats - and looking happy about it!

This happy state of affairs continued for a year, largely thanks to the London and Southern Counties Mouse Club's staging of Rat classes, but at the Portsmouth show of 4th. August 1958, only eighteen Rats were shown and interest in them fizzled out quickly afterwards. The L & SCMC dropped the classes for Fancy Rats and again, for some three years, the Fancy world was, to all intents and purposes, Ratless. However, in 1962, a young man named R.G Phillips from Mountain Ash, South Wales wrote a small article in 'F & F' entitled "The Friendly One", referring, of course, to the Fancy Rat. Despite the advice of certain Fanciers, Mr. Phillips continued to write articles and urged people to keep Fancy Rats. He felt that he had enough support in June 1962 to form an actual, separate club for Fancy Rats, and, in the issue dated 7th. June 1962 the formation of the "National Rat Club" was headlined on the Mouse page. Very shortly thereafter, Phillips combined his talents with those of A.W Bassett and they wrote a very concise and informative series on "The Rat", detailing everything from housing to breeding and exhibition standards, reprinting some material used by Rayfield some years earlier. Periodically, Phillips would publish a small piece welcoming new members to the Club and reminding would-be Rat Fanciers of the subscription rates; 7/6 Adult, 4/- O.A.P.

But the 'boom', (a favourite phrase of the early 60's), was, like many booms, short-lived. After August '62, very little was heard of Fancy Rats and the National Rat Club petered out. Many theories have been put forward to suggest just why Fancy Rats were not popular and that the infant Fancy did not take off as well as the National Fancy Rat Society did in 1976, but, as Mr. Phillips himself told the Author, people at that time saw Fancy Rats just the same as Wild Rats, no matter how much they may be persuaded otherwise. Again, the possible problem was that most interested parties kept Mice and other Fancy livestock - Hamsters were becoming extremely popular at this time and exciting strides were being made colour-wise in their breeding. Mr. Phillips himself wrote in later years about Russian Hamsters and was a prominent member of the Midland Hamster Club in the 70's. However, all was not lost; The London and Southern Counties Mouse Club re-instated classes for Fancy Rats again - and this time retained them - due to the enthusiasm of young Eric Jukes, who became the Hon. Secretary of this worthy club and held the post for many years. He went on to write an excellent series about Fancy Rats in 'F & F' in the late 60's entitled "The Origins and History of the Fancy Rat". He attempted to form the International Fancy Rat Council in 1969, advertising it in the N.M.C year book, but there was a general lack of enthusiasm - the bane of the Fancy Rat.

However, the latest and greatest revival was but six short years away...

Its name has almost become

# "The unmentionable"

Yet it is clean, it is intelligent,  
it will sit up and beg, it is  
affectionate

VERY little has been heard about rats for the last 20 or 30 years. This summer however a rat section will be included at Portsmouth. Details will be advertised in this paper later on. Meanwhile, I think it worth while that the public should know something about the Fancy Rat.

In this article I want to give some practical information on as many aspects of the Fancy Rat as possible. Perhaps more people will take up breeding rats, and the Fancy Rat may become a popular show animal, as it once was.

Just after the first world war the rat existed in many colours. Looking through a catalogue of a livestock breeder of that time one sees all sorts of weird colours, such as stone, agouti, cream. But those who kept rats after the post-war "boom" kept only a few colours. White and black-hooded were the main ones.

Now I know of the existence of seven colours, white, black-hooded, champagne-hooded, orange-hooded, agouti-hooded, champagne and orange. The last two are very rare. (A hooded rat has a white body with a coloured head and dorsal stripe.)

Rats make very good show animals and pets. They cost almost nothing to feed, are easy to accommodate and give quick breeding results. They are intelligent and inquisitive, thus extremely interesting. I have had several rats, which I have taught to answer to a name and to "beg".

The Fancy Rat is one of the most hygienic animals I know, and quickly learns not to soil one's hands! Its tameness is amazing. I have only been bitten by one rat, which was immediately destroyed. The tameness of a rat sometimes almost amounts to affection. With so many points in its favour it is strange that the Fancy Rat is not more popular.

## HOUSING

Housing is governed by a few simple rules: cleanliness, space, and freedom from draughts and damp.

A rat hutch for anything from two to five rats should be at least 2ft. x 2ft. x 2ft. Size should be increased in proportion to the number of rats per hutch.

Incidentally, the rat is a gregarious animal and should not be kept alone in a hutch. The hutch is best made from wood. A tea chest or rabbit hutch is ideal. If either is not obtainable, good hardwood should be the building material.

The best medium for observation, and ventilation, is  $\frac{1}{4}$ in. mesh, 20g. wire netting. This can be fitted onto a frame which can be used as a door, opening outwards on hinges. (See the accompanying diagram.) The hutches should be kept on draught-free shelves in a well-ventilated and well-lit shed or spare room.

One advantage of the Fancy Rat is that any number of bucks can be kept together in one hutch without any fighting. What is more, a doe, provided she is not nervous, can have her litter in a hutch with other rats.

Here, of course, care should be taken to ensure that there is no overcrowding and that she is not mated again, as that is bad for the doe's health.

My system of rat housing is in colonies. These are just over-size hutches, 6ft. x 3ft. x 2ft., which house up to 20 adults. In addition to these, I have smaller hutches for two or three bucks, sick rats, or a nervous doe with her litter.

As with mice there is one slight problem. If one introduces a stranger to a group of rats long established in their hutch, the stranger is liable to be bullied.

There are two solutions to this. One is to move the entire group to another hutch, where in strange surroundings a new rat will not be noticed. The other is to devise some way of giving the new rat the same smell as the old ones.

This can be done by rubbing it in the bedding, or by pouring flour over all the rats concerned, thus, in washing the flour off, the smells will be intermixed.

This problem does not arise if one is putting a buck into a doe's hutch, or vice versa.

Good thick pine sawdust should be spread liberally over the floor of a rat-hutch. The sawdust should be scrupulously cleaned out and replaced at

least every week. Cleanliness is essential for healthy rats. If you are friendly with your butcher he can usually sell you quite cheaply some very good quality pine sawdust.

## BEDDING

As for bedding and nesting quarters, I find there is one golden rule. Never apportion off a separate nesting quarter. This is because the rat will be tempted to start storing food, which will decay and create an unpleasant odour. Rats which are kept reasonably clean, even bucks, should never smell.

For bedding I find a good quality straw preferable to hay, because rats can chew on straw. If, however, straw is not obtainable hay is perfectly good. Care should be taken that the straw is clean and not musty. Before placing straw in the hutch it is advisable to shake it to dispose of any dust, which can contain parasites' eggs.

Place the straw or hay in one corner of the hutch and the rat will make its own nest.

With does which are nursing or expecting litters these rules can be relaxed. The bedding, which should normally be changed every week, should be left until the babies have opened their eyes. Sawdust should be changed only if the doe will not be disturbed.

Every month the hutch must be cleaned out more thoroughly. The floor, if not scrubbed, should at least be disinfected. Make sure the hutch is properly dry before putting in its occupants.

If there are any insects in the shed where you keep your rats, it is advisable to put a little non-poisonous insect powder in the corners of the hutch. At every monthly cleaning look out for any holes which have been gnawed, though this will not occur often, since rats are not nearly so fond of gnawing as are mice.

The rat likes to have something to do. A good idea is to nail some thin

pieces of wood in the hutch for the rat to climb about on.

In addition to this, rats like to be handled a great deal. It has been conclusively proved in some laboratory tests that rats which are handled are happier and grow bigger and healthier than those which are not.

## FEEDING

As any animal fancier knows, a glossy coat and bright eyes are a direct result of good and wise feeding. Rats cost very little to feed and never over-eat. The only time one has to watch a rat's diet is with certain strains of black hooded, which tend to get very fat.

A rat's diet is similar to that of a Fancy Mouse, except that there is considerably more scope. The staple food is bread and seeds, such as sunflower, millet, crushed oats (whole oats are rarely accepted) and boiled maize.

Supplementary to this basis are broken dog biscuits, such as Spratt's Cruckles, which go quite a long way and which all rats enjoy.

Also enjoyed are boiled vegetables, clean household scraps and greens, such as the outer leaves of a cabbage. Some rats have a craving for sliced, raw carrots.

In winter, boiled rice and macaroni may be given in quantity. Rats appreciate this particularly if it is hot. Rice (the unpolished form is more nutritious) is very cheap. The fancier should not be frightened of giving his rats a change, or even a revolution in diet, though, of course, changes must be gradual.

Rats should be given milk to drink in dishes which cannot be tipped over. For does with litters, egg, beaten up with flour, sugar and milk, will produce very healthy youngsters.

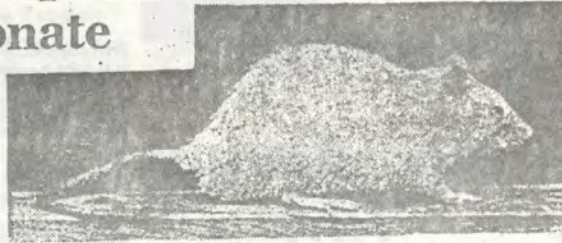
All food must be given in dishes, never laid on the floor of the hutch where it might be soiled. Dishes must be cleaned thoroughly every night.

Suitable dishes can be found under all sorts of guises. Very good food dishes can be made from cat-food tins carefully cleaned. If they are kept clean they will not rust.

For milk, small fish-paste jars will do very well, as will well cleaned-out tins for Spratt's Meat for Cats and Dogs. There is a good deal of room for ingenuity.

Give as much food as the rat can eat. The feeding habits of different rats vary enormously. The best and most convenient time to feed rats is the evening. There is no need to give a morning feed except for does with litters, which can have some milk. Does with litters tend to hoard food in the nest. There is no need to stop them as this will cease as soon as the litter has opened its eyes.

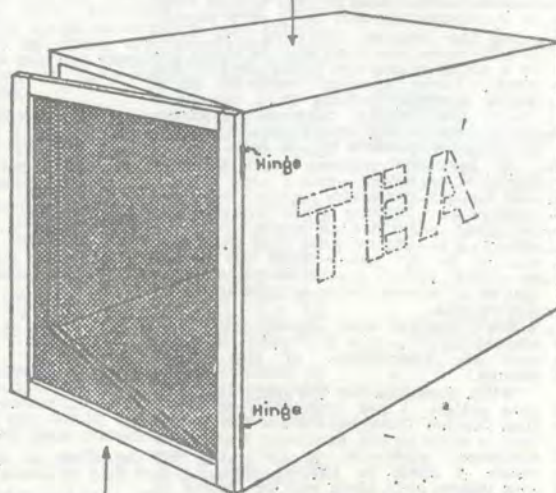
(To be continued)



## THE FANCY RAT

by D. Rayfield

TEA-CHEST or BOX MADE OF GOOD HARDWOOD



DOOR FRAME FROM  $1\frac{1}{2}$  x  $\frac{3}{4}$  TIMBER and WIRE NETTING

**MORE ABOUT THE "UNMENTIONABLE"**



# The Fancy Rat

by D. RAYFIELD

THE next, and a very important aspect of the Fancy Rat is breeding. Here, there are few difficulties. But first I feel I should give some data. The oestrus cycle, that is the period between the doe's heats, is only five days. The period of gestation is about 22 days. The litters are fully furred by 12 days old, and the babies open their eyes at 14 or 15 days.

About this time the youngsters begin to eat solid food, starting on soft tibbits that the doe brings to the nest. By three weeks they will be eating freely from the food dishes. At four and a half weeks they are fully weaned, at five ready to leave their mother. At 12 weeks they are sexually mature, though mating can occur before that age. It is, however, better to wait until 15 weeks when the doe will be able to cope with the strain of a litter. The litter number from three to 16, averaging at about nine.

Before I continue I will say a few words about culling. Culling should only be carried out when the doe is a particularly weak one. In no circumstances will culling increase size. A rat which comes from a litter of two will probably be no bigger than one from a litter of fifteen. This is because the doe only produces as much milk as is needed. If half the litter is culled the doe will only produce half as much milk.

Of course, if a doe is ill from the strain of a large litter, cull by all means. But a doe which is healthy enough to be mated is healthy enough to bring up a large litter. At present, a doe of mine, which is rather small, is bringing up a litter of 16, and every one of these is large, strong and healthy. My stud buck, which is a giant of a rat, came from a litter of 12.

One objection to culling is that the doe may be disturbed by the disappearance, or disturbance of some of her litter, that she may refuse to look after them.

Rats make very good mothers. I estimate the death rate in my litters to be under three per cent. Occasionally a doe with her first litter may make a hash of it. On the rare occasion of a doe savaging her litter for the second time running I immediately have her destroyed.

Whether one keeps rats in twos or threes, or in segregated colonies of bucks and does, one should remove the buck and the doe to be mated to a separate hutch.

If you are interested in the antics of your rats you will notice that many pairs will have a "courtship" in which the buck builds a nest for the doe, brings her tibbits and washes her neck! Many bucks do not mate on the first heat; they wait for the second.

Once the doe is returned in kindle the buck can be returned (but precautions must be taken to ensure that he will not be bullied) to his former companions.

A doe in kindle should be given plenty of straw or hay and should not be picked up, though an occasional stroke on the nose will make her less resentful against any interference in the nest that may become necessary. The arrival of the litter will be noticed by the squeaks and the figure of the doe.

At the age of two and a half weeks, when the doe will not object too much, the litter can be sexed. Does will be easily recognised by the teats, bucks by the greater distance between genitals and vent.

At the age of seven weeks the litter should be segregated and the doe returned to the company of other does. As a matter of principle one should always allow four weeks minimum between being parted from a litter and replaced with a buck.

If a buck is moulted that should not stop him being mated. It is a fallacy that moult affects the progeny. Moult is a temporary condition and by no conceivable means can it affect the

chromosomes in a buck's spermatozoon. Moult in a doe is unlikely to affect the litter unless her health is bad.

## DISEASES OF THE RAT

The rat is not at all prone to disease. The few illnesses that the rat can catch are generally fatal. At a conservative estimate 20 per cent. of the deaths of Fancy Rats are due to cancer. It is incurable, except by complicated surgery—which no rat is worth. Rats and mice are very prone to cancer. By brushing some tar on a mouse's back cancer appears in 70 per cent of the cases.

However, there are one or two precautions which a rat fancier can take. One is to ensure that all hutches are free from creosote. Creosote, though not a cause, is definitely very dangerous in bringing out tendencies to cancer. Naturally, any rat with cancer should be destroyed immediately.

Pneumonia occasionally occurs, but this is usually the fault of the fancier. He should look for the cause, damp, draught, and so on, and correct it.

Deficiencies in quantity and quality of diet can lower a rat's resistance to illness. Cures for pneumonia can be attempted, and should be if the rat is a good specimen.

Bring the animal indoors, give it plenty of warmth and rich food such as egg, and there is an even chance of a complete recovery. Chills can be cured in the same way.

Now and then cases of diarrhoea or constipation crop up, and these can be relieved by a correction in the diet.

Very, very occasionally one meets with a savage rat. A rat which bites is an unpleasant animal and should be destroyed. Contrary to popular opinion if the wound is cleaned out, a rat bite will not be septic.

The signs of health in a rat are a glossy coat, bright eyes, a friendly, inquisitive air, a good appetite and bright orange teeth. Pale coloured teeth, incidentally, indicate a deficiency of iron in the diet.

## EXHIBITION RATS

As to the show standard of a rat I am afraid I cannot help much, since no-one seems to have made a Standard. Obviously, however, a rat should be large (eight inches in body length is a good size). It should have every appearance of good health. It should be perfectly tame. Its tail should be evenly tapering and about seven eighths of the body length. The ears should be fairly large, but not so large in proportion to the head as a mouse.

In the hooded varieties the hood should cover the head and be clean cut in a circle round the lower part of the neck. There should, however, be a white triangle cutting into the hood under the throat. The dorsal stripe should follow the spinal column, joining the hood, down to the tail.

As for the colours, until the rat Fancy is organised—and I hope it soon will be—no-one really knows. So many colours have sprung up in the last two or three years which no-one is sure about. I should imagine that the black should be jet black with no agouti patching; agouti should be pure white, not an off-shade cream so common with albino rats.

For orange and champagne one should refer to the Standard for fawn and for champagne of the Fancy Mouse.

With apologies for the deficiencies of this article, I ask anyone who would like further information on the Fancy Rat to write to me, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope, if they do not mind. I shall be abroad over April, and letters sent then will be replied to as soon as possible.

If anyone wishes to have further details about the coming rat section next August he should write to the secretary: Mr. E. Gray, 35 Angerstein Road, North End, Portsmouth, Hants.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE:

In April, 1957, the Fancy Rat made a comeback, thanks to a dedicated handful of Rat Fanciers, notably D. Rayfield, J. Curzon and E. Gay. Together, they pushed for the inclusion of classes for Fancy Rats at the Portsmouth Show in August 1957. D. Rayfield penned a two-part article which was published on 4th. April 1957 (over page) and the following week, 11th. April 1957 (Left). The concept of Fancy Rats at that time must have seemed far more appalling and even disgusting to people than it did at the early days of the National Fancy Rat Society, as yet some nineteen years distant.

The Rat Fanciers of the late fifties tried as hard as any Fanciers could to promote interest in the Fancy Rat and wrote several articles for 'F & F' during 1957 and 1958, but, alas, the Fifties did not belong to the Fancy Rat after all, for it was not until 1962 that an actual club was formed strictly for Rats.

# You just won't believe it, but This is the friendliest of all pets

by J. CURZON

Throughout the past year references have been made in "Fur and Feather" to a creature whose name inspires dislike, but who turns out to be the friendliest of almost all pets. He is the tame, educable, highly-intelligent Fancy rat. He is produced in many varieties. Here are some.

## THE JAPANESE

THE Japanese or Hooded rat is probably the best known variety. The markings can be of any colour on white and consist of a hood covering head, shoulders, throat and chin, and a saddle or stripe extending to the tail. The edges of both hood and saddle should be clean cut, without brindling. The tail should be parti-coloured.

The most difficult point to achieve is a good saddle. This should be of moderate breadth and extend unbroken to the tail. When the saddle is unbroken, it is usually too heavy and there are often spots.

When the breadth is right it does not often extend all the way unbroken. Too heavy markings can often be corrected by the use of Cap blood.

Spots in the white, white on the throat or head are particularly to be avoided. The standard for Japanese is as follows:

Colour, including purity of white	25
Head and saddle	25
Condition, not fat, short, sleek glossy coat	15
Shape and carriage	10
Size	5
Head, long, not too pointed	5
Ears, size, shape and position	5
Eyes, large, bold and prominent	5
Tail, long, uniform, no kinks	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## THE IRISH

THE average owner of an Irish rat imagines he has an unmarked, and a not too attractive animal. In some feet markings are very poor. Chest triangles are non-existent in my stock, and I shall have to spend a lot of time breeding them in.

Even without the triangle, however, the Irish is a pretty rat. It can be of any colour, although the markings do not show well on pale colours. There should be a white equilateral triangle on chest, and four white feet. The triangle should occupy all the space between the front legs, and be clean cut, without a belly streak. The feet should be like the stops of a Dutch rabbit.

I have Irish blacks and agoutis, but so far no chest triangles. I prefer these with a white tip to the tail, but tip only.

### STANDARDS

	Sells	Agoutis
Colour	35	30
Condition	15	15
Triangle	10	10
Shape and carriage	10	10
Size	5	5
Ticking	5	5
Feet	5	5
Ears	5	5
Eyes	5	5
Head	5	5
Tail	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

## THE BERKSHIRE

THE origin of the name Berkshire, like that of the last, is unknown to me. The Standards allow for these markings in black and white only, but I see no reason why other colours should not be bred.

The head, back, sides and greater part of tail are black, belly, feet, legs, middle joint, and tip of tail white, white on tail not to exceed 1 in. in length.

On the sides, the line of demarcation to be clearly and sharply defined and straight. A white flash on forehead is desirable.

Marked varieties of animals deteriorate very rapidly without careful breeding, and this one has deteriorated out of existence. I have been fortunate enough to obtain a doe with markings a rough approximation of this, though with bad white runs up the side showing her hooded ancestry.

The Irish is the obvious cross for this, and will in time give the desired markings, except the flash.

A cross to Even will probably give this, though it will no doubt upset the markings, which should be aimed for first.

### STANDARD

Demarcation of body	20
Head, marking and shape	15
Tail—including white not to exceed 1 in.	15
Feet and lower half of legs white	15
Condition	10
Colour	10
Shape and carriage	5
Eyes	5
Ears	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## THE SELF

THE best known self coloured rat is, of course, the albino, though self is in one way, a misnomer, as most albino rats are albino hooded. It can, however, be of any genetical makeup which can only be seen in breeding results.

There are several different strains of albino, but all I have seen are not white. I once had a white doe but she proved to be sterile.

The youngsters start white and gradually turn a delicate ivory colour. The chief difference between the various strains is that some have bluish pink skin and some a yellow one. The latter produce a yellow fatty deposit on the skin which, if not removed, spreads along the fur turning this yellowish. A bath, however, makes these the same colour as the first group.

Such an incomplete albinism is not unknown in other animals. There is a similar gene in mice, called extreme dilution. At the moment these animals are shown under the name of whites, but ivory would be more appropriate.

Considerable discrepancy exists between the old Standards and the self colours now available. These now comprise black, champagne and cream. Not all of these are unmarked, but where a marked variety exists it is only a matter of time before the self is produced.

The black is an animal with a double dose of a, an Aa or AA animal being an agouti. The Champagne is a pink eyed black, aaPp being champagne, aaPp or aaPP being black.

It should be noted that although this is nearly the same colour as the mouse, the genetical makeup is not the same. An aaPp mouse is dark self silver, champagne being pink eyed chocolate.

The old rat Standards say the eye should be ruby and not pink, but no reason is given, and certainly they are pink.

The creams are a recessive dilutant of champagne, but as I have not yet had the opportunity to try out the effect on black I am not in a position to say just what the gene concerned is.

Cream is, perhaps, the wrong name. Maybe stone or buff would be better.

In most animals, cream is the term for an animal which bears the genes

for yellow and blue dilution, such as a cream cat, and the term "cream" should perhaps be saved for these, when they reappear.

It should be borne in mind that this does not apply to the cream mouse, which is the yellow Chinchilla referred to by most genetists as dirty white.

The self colours listed in the old Standards are: black, blue, chocolate, white, cream and fawn. There is also a Havana Standard.

They are divided into three groups. The first three comprise the first of these, and only the black is still in existence. A blue is a black with a double dose of d or Maltese dilution. It is possible that this may be the factor diluting champagne to "cream," but it is necessary to produce second generation black x "cream" to find out.

Chocolate is a black with a double dose of bb instead of B. This gene appears to be missing, though like all recessives, it may turn up in inbreeding.

Returning to the blacks, the greatest difficulty here is to produce sound coloured feet, as these are much lighter than the body on a wild rat. Only perseverance can help with this.

Most modern blacks show a fair amount of silvering, or white hairs. These must be bred out, but the animals showing them should not be discarded as, by concentrating on increasing the white hairs, silver greys can be produced.

It should be noted that a black rat is not as black as a black mouse, nor should it be. It should be compared to a black rabbit such as the black Beveren. That is, it should have a dense black top colour, with blue under-colour, and the ears and tail though dark, will not be black.

A black mouse of exhibition type is not really a black at all. An ordinary aaBBCCDDPP mouse is the colour just described. The show black is an extended or intensified black, like the dark steel or black Flemish rabbit.

Of the next group, albinos have already been dealt with, and if by fawn, orange is meant, as is usual, none are to be seen on the show bench at present. Creams also have been mentioned. This Standard will do very well though for both normal and dilute champagnes. The difficulty with feet colour does not arise with these, and fewer points are allowed for feet accordingly.

### STANDARD

	Blacks	Whites
Colour	etc.	etc.
Condition	40	45
Shape and carriage	15	15
Feet—sound in colour	10	10
Size	5	5
Ears	5	5
Eyes	5	5
Head	5	5
Tail	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

9 JANUARY, 1958



Photo by Hampshire Telegraph.  
They were just a bit shy—the Fancy rats we mean—but in such close proximity to these two bathing beauties at the Portsmouth Carnival who wouldn't be.

## EIGHTY GENERATIONS OF BROTHER TO SISTER MATINGS

The rat classes at the Portsmouth show on 4-7 Aug. were a great success. For the first show in 30 years the entry was remarkable. Altogether 32 rats were entered, and an additional 21 specimens were on show brought down by Mr. Plink (who was judging) and myself. Most of the animals were very poor compared with the rats of 30 years ago. But with such a long gap it is surprising that the rat, as a show animal, had not degenerated more. Type was good, as was condition, but the markings of the hooded rats were jagged and uneven. Few rats had unbroken dorsal stripes, but many had quite nicely cut hoods. Colour in the hooded rats was poor. The fawn hoodeds were not so bad, but black hoodeds had a grey colour, and on the underneath of the agouti hoodeds the colour degenerated into a chinchilla. The only self on show was white.

Whites formed the majority of specimens entered. One or two, notably the best in show, which was a beautiful young white rat belonging to Misses Burton and Loveridge, had even, china-white coats, but others had coats which were uneven both in texture and colour. A few were moulted with those red-ticked hairs on the neck—a throw-back to the wild rat.

Size was not very good. For some reason few of the animals in the adult classes were grown up. The only rat of good size was a beautiful, fat, silver fawn doe belonging to Mr. Plink, though, of course, it was not entered.

No silver fawns were entered and only one agouti of dubious origin was to be seen. There were several black hoodeds—some had spots on their bellies. Fawn hoodeds seemed to have rough coats and jagged markings. Champagne hoodeds were the best marked specimens—some belonging

## MICE AND RATS AT PORTSMOUTH

Owing to a breakdown to her car Mrs. J. Curson who was to have judged the rat class at Portsmouth on 4 August did not arrive and I was asked to step into the breach. What a poor entry—only 31 from 18 rats. Surely this is not the way for the Fancy to stage a come back. Apart from the Silver fawn owned by Mr. F. V. Plink and the Champagne owned by Mr. E. Gay, size was poor. The winning Jap was quite good, and so was the winning Irish, but why was it not duplicated? On the whole, lulls were not as clean as I would like to see them.

WHITE.—13 WKS.—1 Gay, baby will be good. SILVER FAWN.—1, 3 Plink, excellent size, good colour. 2 Gay, beaten size and colour; 3 falls size and colour. 13 WKS.—1 Pink, baby, will be good. AGOUTI.—1 Gay, good feet and colour; 2 Pink, falls feet. 13 WKS.—1 Gay, good feet. HOODED JAPS.—1, 2, 3 Walters, winner black, good hood. 13 WKS.—1 Gay, fair. A.O.V.: 1, 2 Gay, Cham., good colour and size; 2 black silvering spots; 3 Plink, black. GRAND CHALL.—1 Pink; 2 Gay; 3 Walters.—JOHN HARBOTTLE

to Mrs. Curson were very nicely marked. One cream hooded was exhibited. This was really a pale champagne in colour.

Of the whites, only the youngsters were any good. The two adults had rather creamy coats. The best in show young white was almost peerless. Its colour, texture and type were faultless, but its tail could have been longer. I was told that this rat had been bred through 80 generations of brother to sister mating. Breeding of close relations is safer in the rat than in most animals, but 80 generations inbreeding is a frightening thought. This is probably the cause of the slightly short tail. That is unfortunate because a short tail is the most difficult fault to eradicate. But the young white excelled so much in colour that it was an obvious choice for best in show. Another strange phenomenon in the show was that only one of the rats which was first in the straight class was entered in the challenge. My buck won the challenge, but he was nothing like as good as the best in show.

A hundred leaflets giving general information about the rat had been duplicated. These were soon disposed of. Additional publicity was given through the Portsmouth "Evening News," which reported the show. Two thousand people saw the rats. Thus with this publicity the Rat Fancy has probably recruited many more adherents, and we may be on the way to further advances and a rat club. The Farelham show on 7 Sept. will put on rat classes. I feel sure that even more entries can be obtained. I already have said that the standard of rats has, through the years, deteriorated. But because the rat gives such quick breeding results, and improvement can be made by selection, it is possible to improve the standard of colour and markings to their former standard in a few years. This means that best to best is the only system for improvement. Some fanciers in most types of livestock seem to think that mating best buck to moderate doe produces good stock. Actually only moderate quality stock is produced that way. Rats which are not fit for exhibition stock breeding should be sold as pets or for research breeding.—F. A. Gay.

The first official show of rats for over 23 years was held at Portsmouth on 4-7 Aug., and the standard was considered high. The rat section was one of the main attractions for over 17,000 people. Throughout the judging not a bite was administered to either judge or stewards.

WHITE.—1 Rayfield; 2 Curson. 13 WKS.: 1, 2, 3 Burton and Loveridge. AGOUTI.—1 Curson. HOODED JAP.—1, 3 Curson; 1 Rayfield. 13 WKS.: 1, 2, 3 J. Curson. A.O.V.: 1 J. Curson. CHALL.: 1, 2, 3 Rayfield. Best rat in show, Burton and Loveridge. Many thanks to stewards of this section, especially to Mr. Rayfield, who travelled from London for the three days to steward the show.—F. PINK.

30 AUGUST, 1957.

## THE FRIENDLY ONE

WE have heard a lot lately about the Fancy mouse but what about its large relative the Fancy rat? This animal has fascinated me since I first kept them.

I think that this animal deserves a place in FUR AND FEATHER and I hope to write occasional notes to fill that need. I also hope to get a few people interested in this delightful animal.

The Fancy rat has several advantages over the Fancy mouse. First it is very friendly toward its own kind, whereas in mice the bucks cannot be kept in one cage or they will fight. But rats do not fight, any number can be kept in a cage large enough to accommodate them. Also several does can be allowed to litter in the same cage.

There is a great deal of scope for anyone interested in the Fancy rat.

I will deal with housing in full in a later article. I use tea-chests with perforated zinc tops, and find them ideal for the purpose.

There is no difficulty about feeding. The rat will eat just anything including fish and bones etc.

I would be interested to hear from any fellow fancier or anyone who would like to start with these delightful animals. My address is—R. G. PHILLIPS, Idan-Y-Deri, Woodland St., Mountain Ash, Glamorgan.

## THE RAT R. G. PHILLIPS

I KEEP four or five rats in a box—one I buck and three or four does. I leave the buck with them until they are in kindle. The gestation period is 23 days. The average litter is eight with my does and they rear them with no problems.

I have had litters of 15 or more which are reared just as well, but I usually cull them as soon as the colour or markings can be seen.

Culling is a very important thing with rats. They produce so quickly and soon become overcrowded.

As for taking the buck away from the does I have reared many a litter in a box full of does and a buck and not one baby has been lost.

I leave all four does to litter together usually but a special mating is kept apart on occasions.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE:

The long-awaited Portsmouth Show was held early in August 1957.

Although the report published in 'F & F' on 30th. August 1957 has two rather conflicting statements in its opening and closing paragraphs regarding the number of years since the last Rat Show, possibly due to two authors (Show Secretary and Judge), the support for the Fancy Rat section is evident, albeit only by few Fanciers. (Left).

However, a year later at the same venue, the number of Rats entered had dropped considerably. (Below Left).

It was not until just under four years later and just over five years since the first Fancy Rat article by D. Rayfield, that Rats were really heard of in print again. This time, the Rats' champion was the young Mr. R.G Phillips from South Wales. (Above).

# It's the mental picture that causes the trouble

JOHN K PALIN

SEE Mr R G Phillips, of Glamorgan, Wales, would like to revive the rat Fancy (FUR AND FEATHER, April 10). Many others have tried to do this over the years. I hope Mr Phillips succeeds here they have failed.

But why has the Fancy not caught like the Fancy mouse?  
In these notes I shall be constantly comparing Fancy rats with Fancy mice to give some idea of the popularity of the species.

First of all let us see what the name implies. Mention the word mouse and nine people turn up their noses! Some may give a little jump of fright, others are uninterested, while others say, "Oh aren't they cute!"

But mention the word "rat" and invariably people shudder.

It is the mental picture they conjure up in their minds when they hear these two animals mentioned. They may visualize the house mouse, which really is a very unpleasant creature. Others have visions of the pretty little harvest mouse swaying on the top of a wheat stalk in the cornfield and the sleepy little dormouse with his russet coloured coat and long furry tail. Some of the foreign mice are also pleasant to look upon.

But visions of the rat bring thoughts of sewers, drains and places where foul flesh is decomposing, such as slaughter-houses and so on. The very word rat doesn't help either. If only the Fancy rat had another name! I should say that for every rat fancier there are over a hundred mouse fanciers, including the hundreds of buyers every year from pet shops all over the country. Most of these buyers, of course, only last the season but there will be just as many the following year.

What are the good points in a Fancy rat? It is free from any vice and makes a good pet. It has cleaner habits than the mouse and several will live happily together without fighting, which mice will not do.

The rat is very easy to cater for in way of accommodation and feeding. It is far more tame and will not bite as many mice do, and most of all, there is no offensive smell.

In my opinion the Fancy rat is an ideal pet.

If one bred rats for 50 years the type would be the same as when one began—open starting coat, small beady eyes, little crinkled ears and a tail like a piece of string.

In other words, no matter how much selective breeding one does there will still remain the appearance of its cousins—the common farm rats.

But with the Fancy mouse things are different. This is an animal that lends itself to selective breeding. One may begin with undersized, underfed, weakly pet shop mice, but in a couple of years of selective breeding and drastic culling one could have an animal altogether different in type from the original one.

If Fancy rats could be bred this way and made to produce an animal with a sleek shiny coat, a long thick tapering tail and large tulip shaped ears without a crinkle, then I think there would be more Fancy rat fanciers.

At one time, before the war, there were several varieties of Fancy rats; self included, white, cream, black, chocolate, blue and fawn. There were also Japanese, broken, even, piebalds, agoutis and silver fawns. The last-named were most attractive.

Nowadays, however, one seldom sees these colours. Whites, creams, black and brown Japanese or Hooded are what one usually sees in the pet shops.

A breeder of Fancy rats lives just over a mile away from me. He has some unusual colours at the moment, some of the prettiest I have seen. The last time I was there he had about 50, including fawn and white Japanese, fawn and white piebalds, fawn and cream piebalds, and he told me that he was expecting some whites and creams.

Rats are very hardy. They much prefer cold to heat provided there is no damp. They are very prolific and usually have a dozen young in a litter. It is very rare that any are weakly or die at birth, and all the young rats remain the same size as each other. I think this could be due to the fact that they are not as inbred as Fancy mice are.

Rabbit hutches with half-inch mesh wire are ideal for Fancy rats. They need plenty of air, room and light to be healthy.

MAY 10, 1962

FUR AND FEATHER, RABBITS AND RABBIT KEEPING, JUNE 7, 1962

## NOW THEY'VE GOT A CLUB OF



They are as docile as you make them



### THE HOODED ONE

THE hooded rat is the only marked variety we have at present. Its correct name is Japanese Fancy. If correctly marked it is a very beautiful creature. I have bred it in fawn, black, cream and agouti.

Most of these colours however are not like the rich colour in the Fancy mouse. The black is more of a chocolate. The agouti bears no resemblance to the rich golden of the agouti mouse.

The cream is like the cream of the cream hamsters, very pinky. This colour, I find, is one of the best for breeding.

The main fault I find is the strip down the back which is broken in several places. I believe that someone tried to breed a broken rat. I have seen piebalds but I think they are just mismarked hooded rats.

The colour in the young fawn is very good but this becomes very light, with white hairs as the rat matures.

Perhaps one of our mouse fancier friends can help here.

I have a new or revived colour which I hope to put to the Rat Club. I will draw a diagram, and perhaps one of the older mouse men will be able to tell us what it is. I believe, myself, that it is a black like the waster black

with white spots on feet and under belly.

A National club has been formed. The subscription fee is 7/6 adults, 5/- juveniles, OAP 4/-. I hope to enrol new members from these notes. My address is—R G PHILLIPS, Idan-y-Deri Woodland St, Mountain Ash, Glamorgan.



## THEIR OWN

# THAT'S THE FANCY RAT

I HAVE recently read the book "Fancy Mice and Rats" written in 1910 by the founder of the National Mouse Club, the late Walter Maxey.

The section on fancy rats is quite a large one which contains sections on cages, cleaning, rearing, grooming, exhibiting, ailments, and hints on how to breed exhibition class rats in all the numerous varieties; these include self black, Self white, Even Marked, Broken Marked, and Agoutis.

The Agouti made its first appearance on the show bench in 1902 and was bred down from a pair of wild rats which had been taken from a nest while still young and brought up in captivity.

Miss M Douglas who, like Walter Maxey, was a past honorary secretary of the National Mouse Club, helped in the compiling of the section on rats. She was at the time the leading authority on these creatures and was virtually responsible for the introduction of them to the Fancy some years earlier. She offered several valuable cups for competition among rat fanciers in the National Mouse Club.

Although it may be said the rat Fancy was still in its experimental stage at this time, apart from Miss Douglas, among the growing number of rat fanciers were: Mrs E L Marshall, Mr W E Marrott and Mr and Mrs Singleton. Some of the older members of the NMC will doubtless remember these as they were also prominent breeders of mice.

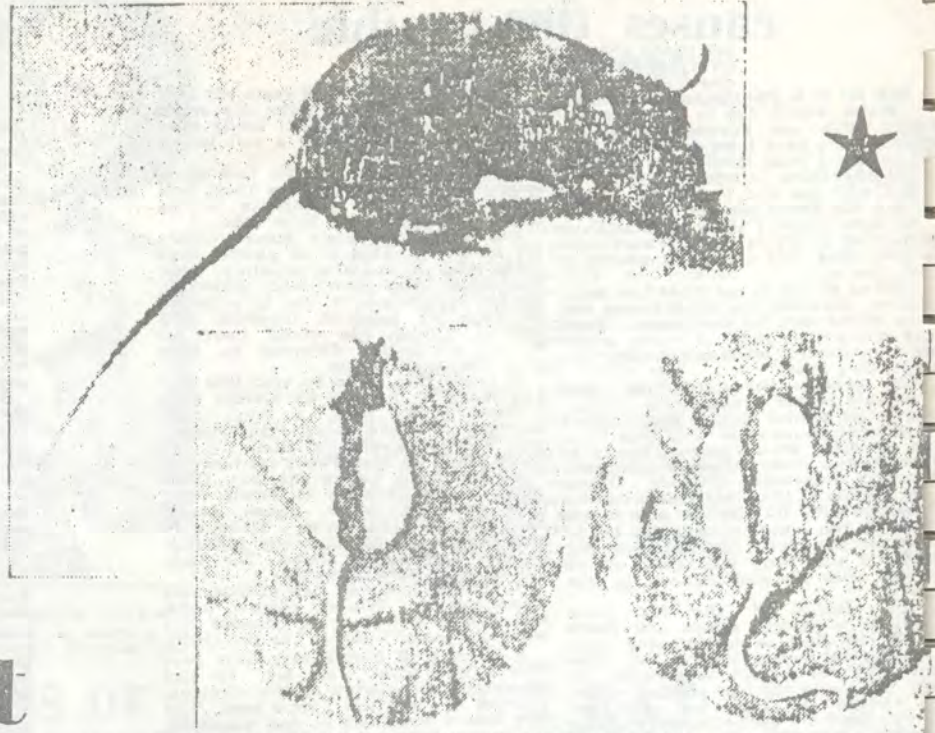
I was interested to read Mr Palin's notes in the issue of May 10, and Mr Phillips's notes which have appeared in FUR AND FEATHER of late. I should be interested to read the views of any rat fanciers in the future.—GRAHAM SHAW

### AUTHOR'S NOTE:

With the benefit of hindsight, today's Rat Fanciers are able to prove John Palin wrong. (Left). It was a historic day when the National Rat Club was formed. (Below).

Following the  
fascinating series  
on the Fancy mouse  
A W BASSETT,  
in collaboration with  
R G PHILLIPS,  
tells the story of  
Genus Rattus—

# The Rat



THE genus Rattus is very large, so large in fact, that naturalists have divided it up into about 30 groups, in which at least some 450 different forms are represented.

The natural distribution of rats is immense, they are found all over Europe, Asia, Africa and the East Indies, the Philippine Islands and Japan; New Guinea, Australia and the Pacific islands of Fiji and Hawaii; as well as numerous small islands which surround the coasts of these countries.

The genus is not natural to the American continent, but was accidentally introduced by man many years ago. More will be said of this later.

Rats are very adaptable, and those introduced on islands and mountains could soon acclimatize themselves to local conditions; then, in the course of time, would differentiate into new species and sub-species.

In one group known as Leucopus, which is found in Australasia, the fur in many cases is spiny, sometimes densely so.

To give representatives from all these groups would be an enormous task, so I will just deal with two, both of which are well known.

**1. The Rattus Group.** There are 22 forms in this group. The type species is the Black Rat (*Rattus rattus rattus*).

The black rat is a nuisance and destructive to man's possessions, but not so much so as its relative, the brown rat. It is of Asiatic origin, and probably reached Britain at the time of the Crusades; although it was driven to remoter parts some 400 years later by the arrival of the brown rat. It is not so scarce, however, as was once thought, being found around ports and even on ships.

It made its way to North America many years ago, and once roamed over wide territory, but here also it was ousted by the brown rat, although it is still fairly numerous in the Southern States. The Alexandrine Rat—*Rattus rattus alexandrinus*—is to be found in America where it is known as the Roof Rat.

The animal is built on slender proportions, with a body length of about seven inches. The tail, which is ringed, scaly and comparatively hairless, is about eight inches long. The fur is long, blue black in colour, with a sprinkling of grey, although brown and fawn specimens have often been seen. The muzzle is long and pointed, and projects far beyond the front lower jaw; the whiskers are long and black; the ears long, thin and red; and the feet flesh coloured. The black rat is very active, clean in

its ways, and is reputed to have a mild disposition.

In feeding, although clean, it is omnivorous, and has been known to devour both fish and molluscs, as well as flesh and vegetable matter.

It is a climber, and in India, where many live an outdoor existence, it is known to nest in trees.

The nest is made by the doe; and usually consists of paper, rags and straw. There are five to six litters during the year, the number of young being seven or eight. They are born blind, naked and without hearing.

One of its greatest enemies is the brown rat, which will destroy and devour it.

**2. The Norwegian Group.** This group consists of 13 forms.

The type species is the Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus norvegicus*).

The brown rat, like its black cousin, is of Asiatic origin. Early in its history it learned to depend on Man and his possessions for its sustenance, and for this reason is sometimes called "commensal" a word meaning "eater at the same table."

Everywhere man has gone it has contrived to go with him, often by stowing away on ships, and once it sets foot on an alien shore it soon establishes itself. It has gained a considerable foothold in North America.

The brown rat is also known as the Hanoverian Rat, possibly because it first reached Britain in early Georgian times.

It is much larger than the black rat; is more heavily built, with a much blunter muzzle, smaller ears and eyes, and a shorter tail, which is slightly haired. The body length is about eight inches, with a tail a little shorter; the colour of the fur is brown-grey above with a tawny tinge and a dirty white on the underparts.

It is less active than the black rat, but much more dangerous, and can inflict severe wounds with its long incisor teeth. Extremely voracious, it will exterminate and eat other vermin which intrude upon its domain. Cannibalism is also practised, killing and eating any member of the family which is weak, sick or old.

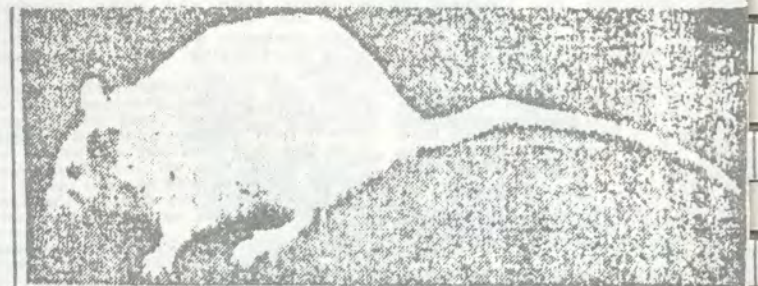
For some unknown reason the males outnumber the females; possibly this has something to do with its cannibalistic habits.

It eats almost anything, from table delicacies to garbage; and that which is not eaten is often fouled. The amount of damage which it does in the course of a year is enormous and totals thousands of pounds.

Whether it lives in a barn or a sewer it is of the same species.

Like other rats, the brown rat has several litters during the year, the young usually numbering from four to ten, although larger litters have been recorded. They are born naked, blind and deaf.

Brown rats, especially those which live in the country, have a habit of



There is evidence of increased interest in the Fancy rat, especially in the south. In this series A W Bassett and A G Phillips (secretary of the newly formed National Rat Club) will describe some of the more popular or better known varieties. In the picture at the top of the page can be seen the Black rat (*Rattus rattus rattus*). This specimen was bred by the late H C Brooke, and was the first specimen to be exhibited at a show. Below are some Japanese marked varieties of the Brown rat (*rattus norvegicus*) bred by Ralph Blake. Third picture is a black-eyed White variety of the Black rat (*Rattus rattus*) bred by H C Brooke and known as the Rattus rattus Brookei and (bottom) a black eyed variety of the Brown rat also bred by H C Brooke.

migrating to fresh localities in the spring; and it is not uncommon to see hundreds of them on country roads during this period.

Hybridization between the black rat and the brown rat is very doubtful.

With all its fierceness and cunning, the brown rat, when domesticated, can become exceedingly tame, and makes an admirable pet for children.

## THE FANCY RAT

"The rat is a most intelligent and affectionate animal, and even those taken in the wild state can be quickly made to respond to a little kindness, and once gain his confidence he will become tame and gentle."

Thus wrote Walter Maxey, Father of the Mouse Fancy.

What better testimonial could a have?

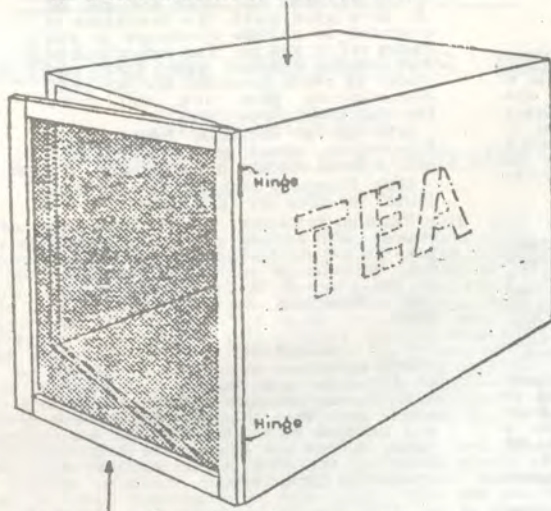
Fancy mice are more popular than fancy rats, possibly because there are more varieties; or even because the very name rat is at once associated with the horrible wild creature. However, rats make very good small animals as well as pets; they cost little to feed, breeding results appear in very short time and they are very hygienic.

Many years ago there were many fanciers, and the National Mouse Club put on classes for these larger rodents although for some unknown reason it fell in decline in the 1930's. Some fanciers gave up, and there were none to take their place.

(To be continued)



TEA-CHEST or BOX MADE OF GOOD HARDWOOD



DOOR FRAME FROM 1/2" x 3/4" TIMBER and WIRE NETTING

the fancy rat

A W BASSETT and R G PHILLIPS

IN 1957 a few keen rat fanciers in southern England started up again, and although things are not what they should be, Fancy rats are still to be seen on the show bench now and again. It seems a pity that these new fanciers should have had to start more or less from scratch, for many of the old varieties have not been seen for years. I must point out, however, that their forerunners began with wild stock.

Both the black rat and the brown rat, in their domesticated forms, were the origin of the Fancy rats; although as previously stated, hybridization between the two species is very improbable. This means that the varieties of both species were brought about by careful selection.

It is quite possible that members of the same group—as aforementioned—would interbreed, and the hybrids thus obtained would, in most cases, be fertile. This would extend the field for producing new varieties, for the number of species in some of the groups is enormous, and all these have been brought about by natural selection.

For example, three species from the *Rattus* group which could no doubt be interbred with success are the Black Rat (*Rattus rattus rattus*), the Alexandrine Rat (*Rattus rattus alexandrinus*) and Sladen's Rat (*Rattus rattus sladeni*) from China.

HOUSING

Housing is governed by a few simple

rules—cleanliness, space and freedom from damp and draught.

A rat cage for any number from two to five should be at least two feet square; and this size should be increased in proportion to the number of rats per cage.

The rat is a gregarious animal—this means that it likes company—and should not be kept alone in a cage. The cage is best made from wood; a tea-chest or a rabbit hutch is ideal. The cages should be kept on draught free shelves in a well ventilated and well lit shed.

One advantage of the Fancy rat is that any number of bucks can be kept together without any fighting. What is more, a doe, provided she is not nervous, can have her litter in the cage with the other rats.

Here, of course, care should be taken that there is no overcrowding, and that the doe is not remated again immediately she has had her litter; that is bad for her health.

A good system of rat housing is in colonies. These are just oversize cages, six feet by three by two, which will house up to 20 adults. In addition to these a few smaller cages for two or three bucks, sick rats, a nervous doe and her litter, are advisable.

As with Fancy mice there is one slight problem; if a stranger is introduced to a group of rats long established in their cage, the stranger

(Continued on next page)

JULY 12, 1962

NATIONAL RAT CLUB

ON behalf of the committee I welcome those who have joined the National Rat Club, an invitation is extended to anyone who wishes to join the club, breeders of fancy rats or not.

If you have any queries what so ever please write to me. I will be glad to help in any way possible.

The club is taking a ballot on what to call various stages in the life of a rat. Names put forward so far are: under 6 wks puppies, or kittens, over 6 weeks to 6 mths pups or kits. Any help from members or non-members of the club on this point will be welcome. It is hoped to publish a small booklet on the rat, similar to the one issued by the Mouse Fancy. Donations to help pay for the booklet will be appreciated. Articles and pictures will also be appreciated. Will anyone able to help please let me know as soon as possible?

This contribution I hope, is the first of many notes on the rat Fancy.

I wish to thank Mr J Youds, Mr Pacey, Miss Noddle, and particularly Mr A W Bassett for his advice and help.

Subscriptions are 7/6 adult, 4/- juvenile and OAP. — R G PHILLIPS, Idan-Y-Deri, Woodland Street, Mountain Ash, Glam.

JUNE 28, 1962

EXHIBITING

When preparing to send Fancy rats to a show always put fresh sawdust in the show cage, also fresh hay or straw for bedding. A little food, such as sunflower seed, and a piece of soaked bread—the animal will get some moisture out of this. Return journeys are always catered for by the show promoters.

I wish to thank Mr D Rayfield for permission to use his notes on housing, feeding, breeding and ailments.

A W BASSETT

Any queries on Fancy rats will be answered by: R G PHILLIPS, Idan Y Deri, Woodland Street, Mountain Ash, Glamorgan, on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope.

is apt to be bullied. There are two solutions to this problem; one is to remove the entire group to a new cage where, in strange surroundings, the new rat will not be noticed. The other is to devise some means of giving the new rat the same smell as the old ones. This can be achieved by rubbing it with some of the bedding and sawdust from the cage, which will partake of the smell of the occupants.

This problem does not arise when putting a buck into a doe's cage or vice versa.

Plenty of sawdust should be spread on the floor of the cage; this should be cleaned out at least once a week and replaced afresh.

Cleanliness is essential for healthy rats.

As for bedding and nesting quarters, there is one golden rule, never apportion off a separate nesting quarter, because the rat will be tempted to start storing food, which will decay and create an unpleasant odour.

Rats kept reasonably clean, even bucks, will never smell.

For bedding use hay, straw and paper. Place this in one corner of the cage and the rats will make their own nest.

For does with families, the bedding, which would normally be changed every week, should be left until the young have opened their eyes. Sawdust should be changed only if the doe will not be disturbed.

Every month the cage should be cleaned out thoroughly. The floor, if not scrubbed, should at least be disinfected; and you must make sure that the cage is dried out properly before returning the occupants.

At these cleanings look out for any holes which may have been gnawed, though this does not often occur, as rats are not nearly so fond of gnawing as mice.

The rat likes to have something to occupy itself with. A good idea is to fix some pieces of wood in the cage for the animal to climb about on. In addition to this rats like to be handled a great deal. It has been proved in various tests that rats which are handled are happier and grow larger and healthier than those which are not.

FEEDING

As any animal fancier knows, a glossy coat and bright eyes are a direct result of good and wise feeding. Rats cost little to feed and never over-eat. The only time one has to watch a rat's diet is with certain strains of Japanese, which tend to get very fat.

The diet is similar to that of the Fancy mouse, except that there is considerably more scope. The staple food is bread and corn, supplemented with such seeds as sunflower, millet, maize; also a little puppy meal.

Rats also enjoy boiled vegetables, rice and macaroni, household scraps, raw carrot and a little greenfood. Water or milk for drinking.

Food should be given in dishes, and never laid on the floor of the cage where it might be soiled; these should be cleaned every day.

For does with litters an egg beaten up with milk is greatly appreciated.

Give as much food as the rat will eat. Their feeding habits vary considerably. The best and most convenient time for feeding is in the evening; there is no need to give a morning feed except for does with litters, which may need milk.

Does with litters tend to hoard food in the nest, and there is no need to stop them as this will cease when the young have opened their eyes.

BREEDING

A very important aspect of the Fancy rat is breeding; here there are a few difficulties, but first some important facts should be given.

The oestrus cycle, that is the period between the doe's heats, is only five days. The gestation period is about 28 days; the litters are fully furred at 12 days and the young open their eyes at 14 or 15 days.

About this time the youngsters begin to eat solid food, beginning on any soft tit-bits which the doe brings to the nest. At three weeks old they will be eating freely from the food dishes; at four and a half weeks they are fully weaned, and at five weeks they are ready to leave their mother. At 12 weeks they are normally mature, though mating can occur before this age; it is best to wait, however, until 15 weeks, when the doe will be able to cope with the strain of a litter. The litters may number from three to 16, although the average is nine.

JULY 12, 1962

# THE RAT

A W BASSETT and R G PHILLIPS

(Continued from last week's issue)

**B**EFORE continuing, a few lines about the culling of litters is advisable. Culling should only be carried out if the doe is a particularly weak one.

In no circumstances will culling increase the size of a rat. One which comes from a litter of two will probably be no bigger than one which comes from a litter of 15. This is because the doe has as much milk as is needed. If half the litter is culled the doe will only produce half as much milk.

Of course, if a doe is ill from the strain of a large litter, cull by all means; but a doe which is healthy enough to be mated is usually healthy enough to bring up a large litter.

One objection to culling is that the doe will be disturbed by the disappearance of some of her young; so that she may refuse to look after the remainder.

Fancy rats, on the whole, are very good mothers, and if fed and treated correctly, the death roll in litters should be under 3 per cent. Occasionally a doe with her first litter may make a hash of it; and on the rare occasion of saving her litter for the second time running, it is best to have her destroyed.

Whether rats are kept in twos or threes, or in segregated colonies of bucks and does, it is best to move the buck and the doe which are to mate to a separate cage.

It has been observed that many pairs have a "courtship" in which the buck builds the nest for the doe, brings her tit-bits and washes her neck. Many bucks do not mate on the first heat but wait for the second. Once a doe is in kindle the buck can be returned, but precautions must be taken that he will not be bullied by his companions.

A doe in kindle should be given plenty of bedding and should not be handled, although an occasional stroke on the nose will make her less resentful against any interference in the nest which may become necessary.

The arrival of the litter will be noticed by the squeaks and figure of the doe.

At the age of two and a half weeks, when the doe will not object too much, her litter can be sexed. Does will be easily recognised by the mammae; bucks by the greater distance of genitals and vent.

At the age of seven weeks the litter should be segregated and the doe returned to the company of the other does. As a matter of principle, one should always allow four weeks minimum between being parted from a litter and being replaced with a buck.

If a buck is moulty, this should not stop him from being mated; it is a fallacy that a moult affects the progeny. Moult is only a temporary condition, and by no means does it affect the chromosomes in the buck's spermatozoa. Moult in a doe is unlikely to affect the litters unless her health is bad.

## AILMENTS

The Fancy rat is not prone to many diseases, but the few which it can catch are usually fatal. At a conservative estimate, one would say that about 25 per cent of the deaths are caused by cancer. This is incurable, except perhaps, by complicated medical surgery—which the rat is not worth.

However, there are a few precautions which a fancier can take. One is to ensure that all cages are free from creosote. Creosote, although not a cause, is definitely dangerous in bringing out a tendency to cancer.

Naturally a rat with cancer should be destroyed immediately.

Pneumonia may occasionally occur; but this is usually the fault of the fancier. He should look out the cause, which is generally draught and damp, and correct it.

Deficiencies in quality and quantity of diet can lower the resistance to illness. Cures for pneumonia can be attempted, and should be if the animal is a good specimen.

Take the invalid indoors, give it plenty of warmth and rich food, such as egg, and there is an even chance of complete recovery. Chills can be cured in the same way.

Now and then cases of diarrhoea and constipation may occur, and these can be corrected by a correction in the diet.

Another form of complaint consists of pimply ears and tail. This is easily cured by applying a mixture of olive oil and flowers of sulphur, which will clear up the trouble in a few days.

Sometimes a fancier will meet with a savage rat. One which bites is an unpleasant animal and should be destroyed.

Contrary to the popular opinion, a rat bite, if cleaned out, will not be septic.

The signs of health in a rat are a glossy coat, bright eyes, a friendly inquisitive air, a good appetite and bright orange teeth.

Pale coloured teeth, incidentally, indicate a deficiency of iron in the diet.

(To be continued)

JULY 19, 1962

## NATIONAL RAT CLUB

THE National Rat Club has got off to a good start. An invitation is extended to anyone interested in the Fancy rat to join us. The subscriptions are: adults 7/6 per year; OAP and under 18 years juveniles 4/- per year. Subscriptions paid now will carry through until June, 1963.

Will Mr M Nicholas, Bwlla Wells, Breconshire, please get in touch with me. I have mislaid his address.

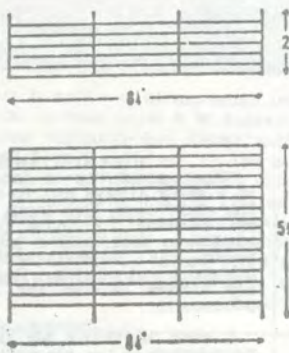
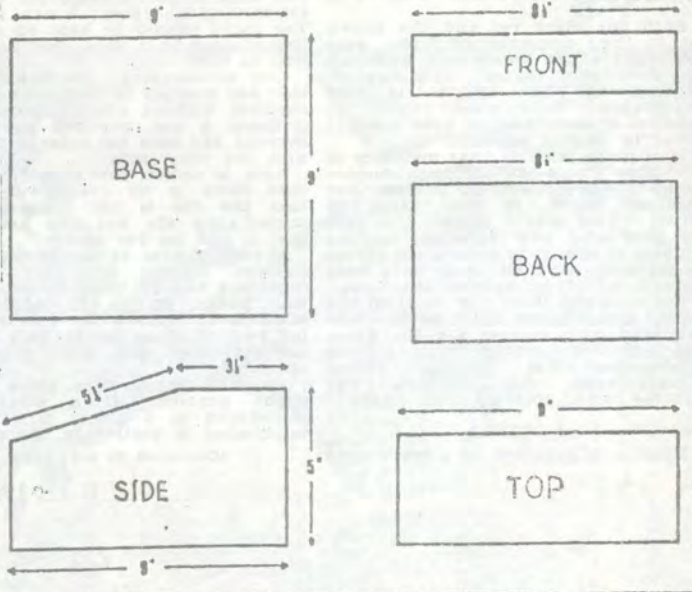
Miss Elizabeth Ashton (adult) has joined us since my last notes.

Various positions in the club are vacant. Will anyone who would like to take an official position please contact me. He must, of course, be a member of the club.—R G PHILLIPS, Idany-Derl, Woodland St, Mountain Ash, Glam.

## DIDSBURY SHOW

Will exhibitors in the mouse section at Didsbury and South Manchester Agricultural Society's show on Aug 6 please note that the AOV adult class was omitted from the schedule published in *FUR AND FEATHER* of July 12. Exhibits for this class should be entered in Class 284a.

## RAT SHOW CAGE WOODEN PARTS



**Wire Front**  
top cross bar of wire removed

**Wire Top**  
one top cross bar removed

### SHOW CAGES

RAT show cages are of Maxey pattern and are similar to mouse show cages except that they are larger.

Mr E Gay, a former rat fancier, quotes:

"All wooden parts (except base) are of 1 inch wood. The base is made of hardboard, and so, changeable. To assemble, fit front and back to inside part of side pieces and secure. Fit top piece and secure. The wire front (with top bar missing uppermost) is then placed inside, front piece into front piece. The top wiring must be hinged, so pass a length of steel wire through side piece, through alternate holes of top and front wire to the other side. A staple driven into each side piece will stop the top wiring from falling into the cage. A small piece of wire fitted to the top will serve as an opening handle. A wire clip driven into the 1 inch part of each side piece will give a locking device. A wire clip on the top wood will allow prize cards to be displayed. Inside must be pillar box red. Outside must be jade-green. NO nails must ever be attached to cages."

### AUTHOR'S NOTE:

The extremely well written series by A.W Bassett and R.G Phillips ran for several issues of 'F & F' during 1962. Some of the information was reprinted from previous issues of the late fifties' "Rat revival", such as the famous "Tea Chest Cage" (over page) and the "Rat Show Cage" (Left), although I have not included the original article here. The old style wooden show cages were larger versions of the Maxey Mouse show cage and had been used in the days of Miss Douglas. The National Rat Club's membership grew slowly, although there was never any mention of meetings or shows. (Above).

# Exhibition varieties and standards

A W BASSETT and R G PHILLIPS

(Continued from last week)

AS has been previously pointed out the older varieties of the Fancy rat are very seldom seen today. However, I will deal as far as possible with those which usually appear on the show bench. Both the Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*) and the Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus norvegicus*) were exhibited and standards of perfection were drawn up for them. For this reason I have kept the Fancy rats in the same two groups already described.

1 The *Rattus* Group. Comprises, or comprised, several self varieties of the Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*).

These were once very popular, and among the colours produced was a black-eyed white, which was stated to be a new sub-species, according to older publications on Mice and Rats. It was called *Rattus rattus brookii* by fanciers, named after Mr H C Brooke, who bred the specimen. I have, however, been unable to trace it in the natural *Rattus* Group.

### STANDARD AND POINTS FOR RATTUS RATTUS RATTUS

In building the varieties of *Rattus rattus rattus*, the typical representation is the Old English Black Rat, which are much more slender than the Common Rat and considerably less in size. The head is long, nose well pointed, ears (as large as possible) nearly twice the size of the Common Rat, and so thin as to be almost transparent. Eyes very black and full (there only appears to be one albino recorded); coat long and shiny, tail very long and slender, dark in colour, tapering to a very fine point. The colour of the typical *Rattus* (Black Rat) slaty black, belly or bluish tinge, slate blue.

Greenish, white, cream, fawn, yellow, dove colour and chocolate are known.

Self Colours. In the Agouti or Alexandrine varieties, first in order of merit is a well ticked ruddy Agouti, with pure white belly, the line of demarcation being sharply defined; next Agouti with grey belly.

### POINTS FOR SELFS

Colour .. .. .	40
Condition—not fat, long, shiny coat .. .. .	15
Shape—slender and elegant, brisk carriage .. .. .	10
Ears very black, bold and prominent .. .. .	5
Eyes of great size, dark, erect, very thin with fine wrinkles .. .. .	10
Head—long and very pointed .. .. .	10
Tail—very long, thin, no kinks, very finely pointed .. .. .	10
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	100

2 The *Norvegicus* Group. Consists of several self and marked varieties of different colours. Much was done by fanciers to attain a high standard of perfection.

### STANDARDS OF PERFECTION

Remarks: The rat should be of good size, long and racy in shape, arched over loins, plump and firm, with clean long head, not too fine or pointed at the nose. The eyes should be bold and prominent and of good size. Ears, feet and tail should be free from warts or roughness, and the coat in all rats should be close, soft and glossy, sleek to the touch and not too long.

In bucks the coat is apt to be somewhat harder and longer than in does. The tail should be well set on,

thickish at butt end, clean and tapering to a fine point, the length being equal to the rat's body from end of muzzle to root of tail. The ears should be of good size and tulp shape and not be set too close together. In Sells, feet, ears and tail should be slightly covered with fur as nearly as possible the colour of the body.

The rat should be perfectly tractable and free from any vice and not subject to fits and other similar ailments.

Kinked tails or fits to be penalised 20 points.

Blacks, Blues and Chocolates. In blacks the colour should be dense, free from silvering or chocolate shading, eyes black, ears, feet and tail slightly covered with fur, as nearly as possible the colour of fur on body. Blues should be a pleasing medium slate blue, rich and level, with ears, feet and tail to match. Chocolates should be the colour of rich eating chocolate, feet, ears and tail to match.

### POINTS FOR BLACKS, BLUES AND CHOCOLATES

Colour .. .. .	40
Condition—not fat, short, sleek and glossy coat .. .. .	15
Feet—sound in colour .. .. .	10
Shape and carriage .. .. .	10
Size .. .. .	5
Ears—shape, size and position .. .. .	5
Eyes—large, bold and prominent .. .. .	5
Head—long, not too pointed .. .. .	5
Tail—long and uniform, no kinks .. .. .	5
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Whites, Creams and Fawns. Whites should be pure in colour, free from ivory, cream or brown tinge, head fine and long, rather than round, ears of good size, fine and clear, eyes full of a deep ruby colour; ears, feet and tail should be slightly covered with fur, bright in colour like satin. Creams should be pale but distinct and level throughout, free from fawn or white patches, undercolour same tint, eyes either black or ruby. Fawns should be as rich and level as possible, with undercolour of same tint, ears, feet and tail to match.

### POINTS FOR WHITES, CREAMS AND FAWNS

Colour .. .. .	45
Condition—not fat, short, sleek and glossy coat .. .. .	15
Shape and carriage .. .. .	10
Size .. .. .	5
Eyes—deep ruby colour or black, bold and prominent .. .. .	5
Ears—shape, size and position .. .. .	5
Feet—sound in colour .. .. .	5
Head—long, not too pointed .. .. .	5
Tail—long and uniform, no kinks .. .. .	5
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Irish Blacks, Chocolates and Fawns. Head, top colour, ears, eyes and tail as in Self blacks, chocolates and fawns. Distinctive markings are a white equilateral triangle on chest and four white feet. The triangle should be of good size, clear and without brindling at edges, and not extending in a streak down the belly. It should occupy all the space between the front legs. The white feet should resemble the stops of a Dutch rabbit.

The origin of the word "Irish" as applied to this variety is the resemblance to *Rattus*—or as the genus used to be called, *Mus-hibernicus*, a supposed new sub-species which was described and named by a Mr Thompson in 1837. It had a white mark on the chest. These had appeared in litters bred by Miss Douglas, a former secretary of the National Mouse Club. I have, however, been unable to trace the supposed sub-species.

### POINTS FOR IRISH BLACKS, CHOCOLATES AND FAWNS

Colour .. .. .	55
Condition—not fat, short, sleek and glossy coat .. .. .	15
Triangle .. .. .	10
Shape and carriage .. .. .	10
Size .. .. .	5
Feet .. .. .	5

Ears—shape, size and position .. .. .	5
Eyes—large, bold and prominent .. .. .	5
Head—long, not too pointed .. .. .	5
Tail—long and uniform, no kinks .. .. .	5
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Irish Agouti, Colour, ticking, build, eyes, ears and tail as in Agoutis. Triangle and foot stops as in Irish blacks.

### POINTS FOR IRISH AGOUTI

Colour, top and under .. .. .	30
Condition—not fat, short, sleek and glossy coat .. .. .	15
Triangle .. .. .	10
Shape and carriage .. .. .	10
Size .. .. .	5
Ticking .. .. .	5
Feet .. .. .	5
Ears—shape, size and position .. .. .	5
Eyes—large, bold and prominent .. .. .	5
Head—long, not too pointed .. .. .	5
Tail—long and uniform, no kinks .. .. .	5
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Japanese (Hooded and Saddled). Sides, legs and feet pure white, with head and saddle of any distinct colour. The hood should cover head, shoulders, throat and chin, without a break, or any white on throat, and the saddle should extend in a straight unbroken line of moderate breadth from hood to tail. The edges of both the head and saddle should be clean and free from jagging or brindling and there should be no spots. Tails should be parti-coloured, ears to correspond in colour with hood, eyes black or ruby, and white to be pure in colour.

### POINTS FOR JAPANESE

Colour, including purity of white .. .. .	25
Head and saddle .. .. .	25
Condition—not fat, short, sleek and glossy coat .. .. .	15
Shape and carriage .. .. .	10
Size .. .. .	5
Head—long, not too pointed .. .. .	5
Ears—shape, size and position .. .. .	5
Eyes—large, bold and prominent .. .. .	5
Tail—long and uniform, no kinks .. .. .	5
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	100

Cap or Hooded. This is a very recent variety; it was first bred in several colours by Mrs J Curzon, who has supplied the Standard for it. The variety is merely the Japanese, but without the saddle. The head only should be coloured, but not beyond the ears, a white blaze on the forehead and the rest of the body white.

### POINTS FOR THE CAP OR HOODED RAT

Colour, including purity of white .. .. .	25
Cap, not to cover shoulders .. .. .	15
Blaze, not too small or large .. .. .	10
Condition—not fat, short, sleek and glossy coat .. .. .	15
Shape and carriage .. .. .	10
Size .. .. .	5
Head—long, not too pointed .. .. .	5
Ears—shape, size and position .. .. .	5
Eyes—large, bold and prominent .. .. .	5
Tail—long and uniform, no kinks .. .. .	5
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	100

JULY 26, 1962

### AUTHOR'S NOTE:

It is interesting to note from the above list of Standards that there was, at one time, two standards for "Hooded", Japanese and the Cap or Hooded, bred originally by Mrs. Curzon and now referred to as "Capped".

# WHAT YOU SHOULD BE BREEDING FOR—THE STANDARDS (continued)

A W BASSETT and R G PHILLIPS

**O**UR series on the Fancy rat ends with the remainder of the Standards for these fascinating animals.

**Even Marked.** Any rat should be considered even marked which has any even distribution of any distinct colour divided up into spots or patches. These should be of a good size, clear and distinct, but not large. An unbroken hood, while not disqualifying, should be greatly against a rat, preference being given to cheek and blaze, as in Dutch-marked. Edges of hood and spots or patches to be clearly defined and free from brindling. Tail particoloured. Eye black or ruby, and white fur pure in colour.

### POINTS FOR EVEN MARKED

Colour, including purity of white .. .. .	20
Head markings and clearness and number of spots or patches .. .. .	25
Condition—not fat, short, sleek and glossy coat .. .. .	15
Shape and Carriage .. .. .	10
Size .. .. .	5
Head—long, not too pointed .. .. .	5
Ears—shape, size and position .. .. .	5
Eyes—large, bold and prominent .. .. .	5
Tail—long and uniform, no kinks .. .. .	5
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**Broken Marked.** Broken-marked rats should have no hood. Spots or patches on head or body may be of any colour but should be unevenly distributed as is consistent with a pleasing appearance. Edges of spots or patches to be clear cut and free from brindling. White fur should be pure in colour. Tail particoloured. Eyes black or ruby.

### POINTS FOR BROKEN MARKED

Absence of hood, clearness of patches, number and position of same .. .. .	30
Colour, including purity of white .. .. .	20
Condition—not fat, short, sleek and glossy coat .. .. .	15
Shape and Carriage .. .. .	10
Size .. .. .	5
Head—long, not too pointed .. .. .	5
Ears—shape, size and position .. .. .	5
Eyes—large, bold and prominent .. .. .	5
Tail—long and uniform, no kinks .. .. .	5
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**Silver Grey, Silver Fawn, etc.** The fur on the upperparts of the body should be of dense colour, richly silvered or tipped with white, should be as even as possible all over the head and body. The belly colouring should approach as near as possible that of the upper parts of the body. Eyes black or ruby; ears, feet and tail as in Self colours.

### POINTS FOR SILVER FAWNS, SILVER GREYS, ETC.

Body colour .. .. .	25
Silvering or ticking, rich and even .. .. .	20
Condition—not fat, short, sleek and glossy coat .. .. .	15
Shape and Carriage .. .. .	10
Size .. .. .	5
Feet—dark, slightly covered with fur .. .. .	5
Ears—shape, size and position .. .. .	5
Eyes—large, bold and prominent .. .. .	5
Head—long, not too pointed .. .. .	5
Tail—long and uniform, no kinks .. .. .	5
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**Berkshires.** Head, back, sides and greater part of the tail black, belly, feet and legs to middle joint, and tail tip white, the white not to exceed one inch in length. On the sides the line of demarcation to be sharply and clearly defined and straight, without any runs or brindling. A white spot on the forehead is desirable; all white markings to be pure in colour.

### POINTS FOR BERKSHIRES

Demarcation of body .. .. .	20
Head—marking and shape, long, not too pointed .. .. .	15

Tail—long and uniform, no kinks, white not to extend one inch .. .. .	15
Feet and lower half of legs white .. .. .	15
Condition—not fat, short, sleek and glossy coat .. .. .	10
Colour .. .. .	10
Shape and carriage .. .. .	5
Eyes—large, bold and prominent .. .. .	5
Ears—shape, size and position .. .. .	5
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**Agoutis (Brown and Fawn).** The head and top colour of the brown should be a rich ruddy brown, evenly and richly ticked with black; under or belly colour ruddy brown minus the ticking; ears and tail dark, feet light, eyes black. (Some Agoutis have silver grey under or belly colour, but ruddy brown is the ideal to breed for.) Fawn—head and top colour light fawn or drab, evenly and richly ticked with darker brown or chocolate hairs, the contrast to be as marked as possible. Belly colour to be as nearly as possible like top colour minus the ticking; eyes very dark red.

### POINTS FOR AGOUTIS (BROWN AND FAWN)

Top colour .. .. .	20
Under or belly colour .. .. .	15
Condition—not fat, short, sleek and glossy coat .. .. .	15
Shape and carriage .. .. .	10
Head—long, not too pointed .. .. .	5
Size .. .. .	5
Eyes—large, bold and prominent .. .. .	5
Ears—shape, size and position .. .. .	5
Tail—long and uniform, no kinks .. .. .	5
Ticking .. .. .	15
	<hr/> 100

**Havana.** The colour of the Havana to be a warm brown, the richer the better, as in the Havana rabbit, the

hairs are light at the base and dark set at the tips, this being less noticeable in young short-coated animals. The silvery appearance given by this in certain lights is not to be confounded with real silvering. Belly colour closely following top colour, no line of demarcation; white marks to disqualify. Fur of ears, feet and tail to match body colour; head darker on top, lighter round eyes, this shade gives a very distinct appearance. Eyes deep dark red, harmonising well with general tint.

### POINTS FOR HAVANAS

Top colour .. .. .	20
Under or belly colour .. .. .	20
Condition—not fat, short, sleek and glossy coat .. .. .	15
Shape and carriage .. .. .	10
Head—long, not too pointed .. .. .	10
Size .. .. .	5
Ears—shape, size and position .. .. .	5
Eyes—large, bold and prominent .. .. .	5
Feet .. .. .	5
Tail—long and uniform, no kinks .. .. .	5
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### EXHIBITING

When preparing to send Fancy rats to a show always put fresh sawdust in the show cage, also fresh hay or straw for bedding. A little food, such as sunflower seed, and a piece of soaked bread—the animal will get some moisture out of this. Return journeys are always catered for by the show promoters.

I wish to thank Mr D Rayfield for permission to use his notes on housing, feeding, breeding and ailments.

A W BASSETT

Any queries on Fancy rats will be answered by: R G PHILLIPS, Idan Y Derl, Woodland Street, Mountain Ash, Glamorgan, on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope.

AUGUST 2, 1962

### AUTHOR'S NOTE:

The beginning of another bleak period for the Fancy Rat and the embryo Rat Fancy. After August 1962, there were no articles that I could find about Fancy Rats or the National Rat Club. Having spoken to Mr. Phillips in 1984 about the rapid decline of the N.R.C, I can understand the reasons. Quite simply, the world was just not ready for Fancy Rats and there was considerable opposition to Rats, Fancy or otherwise in Mr. Phillip's home town. However, it was a noble attempt and one not to be forgotten in the history of the Fancy and, although there was to be a period of thirteen years before the formation of another another club for Rat Fanciers, the darkness was illuminated by a series of articles by Eric Jukes on the Fancy Rat, which he updated and re-published in 1977, the "Origins and History of the Fancy Rat" (see page 56). A period of thirteen years of course, was infinitely better than thirty five years!