

Unstandardised varieties

Ann Storey

I WAS very interested to read about Gary Bayldan's tricolour and would like to ask the following questions:

- 1 Does it breed true?
- 2 Does the rust colour correspond to any existing colour?
- 3 Is there any physical or psychological difference between this rat and your others, ie does it waltz?

In Roy Robinson's book 'Genetics of the Norway Rat' he mentions a 'mosaic'. There are two mentioned, one was a black and blue doe and the other a silver fawn and agouti hooded buck. Both of these were somatic mosaics, that is they did not pass on their colours to their offspring. On the other hand one parent must be carrying this gene at least so I would suggest the doe is mated back to her father. How about bringing it down to a show for us to see.

I would doubt that crossing to a PE White would break up the rood on your evens. All coloured rats have CC or Cc at the albino locus but albinos or PE White are cc. This gene pair cc masks all the other coloured and marked genes at all the other locii. Because of this it would be possible to have a rat that was genetically a self black except that it had the albino gene pair instead of the full colour and so this rat would be a PE White. Crossing this to your rats would give you Irish, Berkshires and bad hoods. So you see you have no way of knowing what your albino is carrying. I would suggest that you try a capped with a heavy blaze.

In 1977 four unstandardised varieties were given a provisional standard; they were the capped variegated, cream and mink. The first three were bred by Les Suttling; quite an achievement. Minks seem to have been around for some time before Jackie Chapman standardised them. She apparently bred her first ones from a black x agouti. Am I right in thinking that this litter also threw cinnamons and any ideas on the parents breeding? I got my first mink in 1974 from an exhibition; a school had a stand and were showing off their animals and they had several minks but I don't know where they came from.

I have been trying some experimental breeding with minks. First I crossed a mink buck who was heterozygous for pink eyed to an agouti doe who was heterozygous for chocolate, non agouti and pink eyed. The resulting litter contained one black, two agoutis, four cinnamons, one silver fawn and three champagnes.

In the second mating I crossed the same buck to another mink who was also heterozygous for pink eye. The litter contained four ordinary minks, two minks with a white base fur and heavy silvering and three pale coloured champagnes. Both parents were silvered and the two kittens with white base coat are beginning to resemble Clive Love's pearls.

In the third mating the same buck was crossed to a black and she had a litter of 100 per cent blacks. I intend crossing a buck from this litter to the two agoutis and one black from the first litter.

I also mated together two cinnamons, both of which were produced from a cinnamon x mink and the litter contained two cinnamons, two minks and three unusual coloured kittens. These are best described as a silver fawn with the same ticking but a butter colour where silver fawns are fawn. When compared to a silver fawn of the same age they make it look very dark and dull. Bearing in mind that silver fawns are pink eyed cinnamons could this new colour be pink eyed dilute cinnamon? Any ideas all you genetics experts?

Mrs Dagg wrote about a two week old mouse being fostered in a newborn litter. This does not surprise me as it used to happen in the pet mice I had. Sometimes a doe would savage the whole lot and on the next occasion she would rear anything even once a baby rat. Coming back to rats I've known does to rear kittens two weeks younger than their litter and also once to come into milk when she had been housed with a doe and litter. She definitely had milk, you could see it and she had not been near a buck.

I once had a rat born with what I think is called Hydrocephalus. He had a big domed forehead and I thought he was cute and called him Whisky. I used to sneak him into bed with me where he chewed the sheets much to mum's annoyance. Unfortunately he used to have epileptic fits and in the end he bit his tongue and had to be put down. I think rats beat all other children's pets hands down and are definitely one of the most intelligent rodents.