THE Mouse Breeder's Text Book

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A HANDBOOK FOR THE RESEARCH BREEDER WITH NOTES FOR THE NOVICE

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BY

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" The Pet Mouse," " More Mousey Matters "

etc.

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TALKING ABOUT COLOURS

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W. T. MADDOCK AND CO., FERNDALE.

Talking about Colours!

The first thing that strikes a person visiting a mouse show or a mouse farm for the first time is the diversity of colours in which mice are to be had. If we take the browns, we have light sepia, dark sepia, light chocolate, dark chocolate, nigger, soot, and chestnut.

Here are seven shades of brown as self colours only. If we add tan to each of these colours, we get fourteen sorts, *i.e.*, chocolate-tan, sepia-tan, etc. Then, when we think of brokens in these same colours, we have another seven. If we go no further we have twenty eight colours in brown. This does not comprehend the vast field there is in Dutch-marked, evens (patches on the flank and back matching those on the adjacent flank) and variegated (brown 'ink 'splashes all over the mouse). And we may even go so far as to include the tricolours in the brown group, for we have at the time of writing a very attractive doe which is a pink-eyed light sepia tricolour, made up with patches of tan underneath.

It is usual to speak of either self colours or ticked colours, but we think it is permissible to add a third distinguishing feature, that is, shot colours. Cross a pure red with a blue and we get a shot colour with fawn dominating but very clearly is blue to be observed when the mouse moves about. A chinchilated blue and a silver brown are other examples of ' shot' colours, although they are basically ticked colours in either case. It is amazing how colours affect type of mice. For instance, just as in Dutch rabbits we expect Dutch to be short and cobby, so it is with mice. At least, that is the rule but there are exceptions (we are thinking of Mr. Trinder of Oxford and his giant dutch that were among the winners in the years immediately after the war). We can hardly think of cream without thinking of its rich quality coat. There seems to be a depth of colour consistent with a smoothness of coat which is found in no other variety. A well-bred cream which is in good coat, therefore in good condition is an eve feast to be remembered. We expect size in creams just the same as we expect diminutiveness in Dutch. The cream belongs to the 'vellows' group in which we have reds, fawns and champagnes. The infinity of these shades is well known. So varied are the shades that it was once proposed by the N.M.C. to have colour cards as a guide to judges when giving awards. A mouse thought to be fawn might look just like putty when placed against a fawn champion.

Then there are reds—and reds! Some resemble carrot, others like a dark edition of salmon pink. It is only a short step from the carrot red to the salmon-pink notwithstanding that the former is in the self colour section whilst the latter belongs to the ticked varieties.

Who can say how many colours are to be had in the ticked varieties. We may stop after we have recited "agouti, gold agouti, cinnamon, chinchilla and pearl, agouti-tan, gold agoutitan, cinnamon-tan, chinchilla-tan, pearl-tan." But there are shades between these—distinct varieties which will breed true namely, chinchilated silver and chinchilated blue. None will deny that these mice are very pretty, although their names never occur on the schedule of mouse shows, because they are unstandardised.

Blue, again, will vary from a dense slate blue to a colour which can only be described as sky blue, akin the lilac sorts. Navy blue may be hard to produce, but this has been accomplished. Most decidedly is it an object of admiration by general consent.

Chinchillas are of two kinds, blue and brown. But what about the black ticking throughout the fur? Are they not very attractive? A distinguishing feature of chinchilla is the white underpart, but have you ever seen a unicoloured chinchilla? If not, then you have missed a treat. Talking about white underparts brings me to the foxes. We have bred foxes from every variety of self colour, and the extra whiteness of the underparts is what makes these every bit as lovely as the tans.

In white mice, we have four varieties, these are pink eyed, white in smooth or astrex coat, and black-eyed in smooth or astrex fur. The pink eyed white has the greatest following in this country among children. Next to Dutch, they are the most tractable, their ruby red eyes contrasting against a pure white, well-kept coat is a sight well worth your gaze. Some people, however, cannot tolerate an animal with pink eyes, and so they prefer a Black-eyed White. I have found this kind always a little wilder than their pink-eyed counterparts, and I have often wondered why.

What a facinating hobby it is trying to breed the winning broken! We get a strain that produces seven or eight spots, then, as we breed onward for the eight to nine spot mouse the stock degenerates and it is obvious that we shall have to make a change of blood. When this is done we get a larger and healthier mouse but the number of spots is less, and so the process is repeated.

The spots! of what colour are they? Ah! here we are again! Variety of colour. The spots may be of black, red, blue, fawn, agouti, yes. I have even seen cream! In my opinion a dilute sepia is the most attractive of all. We spoke about colour affecting type in connection with Dutch mice. Now there is something sturdy about sepia brokens. Where much inbreeding goes on in order to get like to produce like, there must of necessity be a weakening of the tissues and sign of degeneration.

The sepia kinds have not been exploited in this respect as much as the blacks and chocolates, so that may account for their superiority as regards size and stamina.

Let us come now to the Astrex varieties. How many varieties of these are there? Seven years ago we bought a pair of pink-eyed white astrex mice. After eighteen months we had a fairly large stud—not of white mice at all but red! Red with black eyes. So fast are mice in reproducing, that we can change a pure bred stud of mice into an entirely new colour in eighteen months. From these reds we went forward to produce pure black. (Imagine a jet black with a marcel wave coat and you have some idea of their beauty). Chocolate, Dutch, Black, Black brokens, Blue brokens, and lastly astrex-nigger brokens. We have noticed that astrex mice are not so prone to asthma as the smooth coated varieties, in fact we have not known a single instance.

Returning to Dutch mice we may say that this variety is extremely popular among exhibitors. The intriguing business of getting higher saddles and a perfect blaze without these two occurring singly is an absorbing pastime. One can get the saddle higher but will the blaze fail when this is done? Judgment and patience must kiss each other in order to achieve success in getting Dutch champions—" and the colours?" do I hear you ask? The same list of varieties to select from—blue, dutch, black dutch, pearl dutch, silver dutch—it's an endless list.

Thirty years ago, someone writing a treatise on mice said, "There are 30 varieties of mice but before long many more colours will see light of day." How true was the prediction ! Had he said "VERY many more colours" he would have been more accurate still.

PITT FRANCIS THE MOUSE FARM, FERNDALE, GLAM.

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R. PITT FRANCIS

Breeder and Exporter of Fancy Mice and Rats

THE MOUSE FARM, FERNDALE,

GLAM.

Oct 2 1956

Dear Sir, We do not think it a good plan to put a mall mouse in with a few females It might Succeed but it is better to put a few females in the buck's cage (which is quite different) The livek is master of his cage and he wont fight, nor the females wont fight if HEIS IN IT BEFORE THEM. One male will mate with four er even sisc females. Black-eyed whites are not pure bred if any young are born pink-eyed. Black eyes are from the brokens, to which family they belong. We only huy mice during august. yours truly Renthances

R. PITT FRANCIS, THE MOUSE FARM, FERNDALE, GLAM. Established 1922

July 31st. 1956

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