
❖ You Show What? ❖

by Nichole Royer

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That's right, I show rats. No, not cats . . . Rats, and Mice too!

People are usually very surprised when they hear what I do with my spare time. Actually, showing rats and mice is not all that unusual of a hobby, and it's gaining in popularity every year.

Often just mentioning the word rat or mouse is enough to give many people goose bumps. Into their minds pop visions of dirty, little disease-carrying rodents who attack babies and live in sewers. There are few animals as misunderstood, and often the media doesn't help.

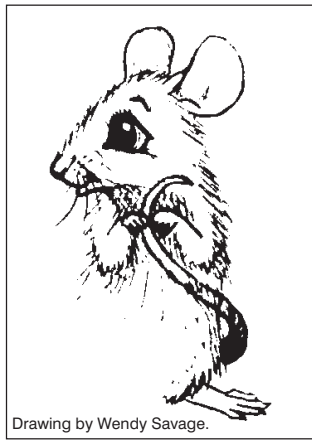
It is true that in their wild state rodents can cause problems; however, the ones many people chose to have as companions are truly domesticated animals and make wonderful pets. They are inexpensive to house, easy to care for, affectionate to their owners, and very intelligent. Rats are so smart that you can teach them any trick you can teach a dog (and often the rat will learn it faster).

A Rainbow Of Colors

Everyone knows there are white rats and mice, but how about Blue, or Lilac, or even ones marked like a Siamese cat? Starting with the original "wild" brown, fanciers have bred a whole rainbow of colors. In fact, there are over 35 recognized colors, and many more combinations of markings and coat types. There are Long Haired mice, Satin mice, Tailless rats, rats with different colored eyes, and there are even rats and mice that have no hair.

The First Show Rats

The first show which included classes for rats as show exhibition animals, or "Fancy Rats," was staged in the early



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1900s in England. These shows were an offshoot of the already very popular mouse clubs in existence at that time. Since then, the popularity of rats and mice has steadily grown, and today there are clubs and organizations around the world promoting these curious little creatures both as pets and show animals. As people have less time, money, and space, they are turning to hobbies which offer them the same rewards but fit better into their lifestyles. For this reason the popularity of rats and mice as companions and show animals is sky-rocketing.

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For further information on rats and mice as pets, or on upcoming shows, contact:

American Fancy Rat and Mouse Association
9230 64th Street
Riverside, CA 92509-5924

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Rat and Mouse Shows

Rat and mouse shows are very similar to cat, rabbit, cavy, or dog shows. The organization holding the show recognizes an official standard for each type of rat or mouse, and trains judges to evaluate animals based upon that standard. Fanciers breed animals to conform as closely as possible to these standards, and the best of these animals compete for the prestigious title of Best Rat or Mouse In Show. Most shows also include other classes such as Best Youth Rat (judged on the same criteria as the regular classes), Most Matched Pair, and Stud Buck. All shows have pet classes for kids and adults, which are open to all animals regardless of their physical qualities. Pet judges have the most difficult job, as they have to pick the animal they think is the best pet, and every animal does its best to win the judge's heart.

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The American Fancy Rat and Mouse Association (AFRMA) was founded in 1983 to promote and encourage the breeding and exhibition of fancy rats and mice, to educate the public on their positive qualities as companion animals, and to provide information on their proper care. Based in Riverside, California, AFRMA is one of the largest organizations of its kind. It is a non-profit organization which holds several shows a year, all of which are open to anyone whether they are a member or not. Members receive AFRMA's informative newsletter *AFRMA Rat & Mouse Tales*, along with the bylaws, a Show Regulations & Standards book, a Directory, and a membership card.

