



fancy rats, gerbils, hamsters,
ranch chinchillas etc.

mice

MICE-ELLANY by Tony Cooke Are genetics really necessary?

I WAS interested by John Palin's article in the March 29 edition of FUR & FEATHER and by Roy Robinson's reply. I cannot entirely subscribe to the viewpoint that the practice of genetics in the Fancy is entirely irrelevant. It is possible to be 'number one' in the Fancy without any knowledge of genetics whatsoever, but any achievements would be 'in spite of' the absence of genetics.

Without some grasp of the principles the Fancy would be a much poorer hobby. For example, without the knowledge of how to propagate a recessive or combine it with others the rabbit Fancy would not possess the rex today. Neither would the mouse Fancy possess the Satin. So the Fancy has reaped enormous benefits from a little knowledge of this 'unnecessary' science.

And then again, what is 'the Fancy' all about? It's about relaxing and having fun. For some individuals the genetic pottering around is as much fun as the pure showing and for others showing is the be-all and end-all. Neither is absolutely right or absolutely wrong in pursuing their version of the hobby. Indeed, for a few fortunates there is the best of both worlds.

No, John, genetics is no more limiting than showing. You talked in your article about winning the Mendel Gold Cup and you infer that genetic knowledge alone cannot contribute to a person winning

this trophy. I suggest that while you are not entirely wrong there you are certainly not entirely right.

In my last article I talked about ambitions and referred specifically to an ambition to win the Mendel Gold Cup with a Dutch. There is just no way that this could be achieved by a 'pure' (non-genetic) fancier—not a snowball's chance in hell. Yet I WILL do it (eventually) if it takes me another 50 years in the Fancy. To borrow a phrase from another regular FUR & FEATHER contributor 'I want to win and I will'. And when I do it will be a little genetic knowledge which has helped me do it.

To close this topic I think a quotation from Percy Ashley is appropriate. I don't know the date as I only have an undated copy of an article by Percy entitled 'How To Breed Good Silver', but in it he says: 'I will remember the late Doctor Kerr MBCHB whenever we met at shows would say "Come on Ashley sit down and let us chat about how you have bred your black-eyed whites". I would say "Doctor, you know all the answers in genetics". He would reply "You, Ashley, have all the practical breeding answers". Many an interesting hour we spent discussing the pro's and con's of various breeds and I am certain we both derived untold benefit from it.'

That really says it all doesn't it?

Lancashire Hotch Potch

LOOKING BACK over 1978, it was not the happiest year of my life. First I fractured my leg in two places. My old Siamese cat, companion of seventeen years died. Brian was ill for months with whooping cough and acute bronchitis. To top it all my mice picked up a virus from some unknown source and commenced to hunch up and die in about two days, just as I was doing rather well at the shows.

I took a specimen to my veterinary surgeon and stopped showing and banned any visitors to my shed, while the results from the laboratories came back. They found it was a virus of 99% fatality. I lost 350 mice altogether and when I obtained a trio of stock about four months later I had them examined once more before I increased stock. They were proved clear, and I had a fresh start.

My friends in the Fancy, and even fanciers with whom I had had differences in the past offered mice in profusion which moved me deeply. I realised what a wealth of true friendship exists in our Fancy—sometimes its even a kind of love, which one does not realise until one is a recipient of the warm generosity extended to a fellow fancier. When I am feeding my mice I always think about the others who will be feeding theirs, and I am never lonely in my hobby.

I was given some of my improved, original stock and am now building up a good stud of many varieties.

I feed my mice on the best possible diet, with lots of Sunflower seed (which is their all-time favourite), a new brand of dog food which contains lots of calcium and is in the shape of small bones.

Cider vinegar, which is obtainable at health food shops (just a drop mixed in with the moist baked bread) is a wonderful conditioner recommended to me by a livestock producer who breeds commercial rabbits and milk producing cows. He said that since his stock had been having it in their food, the size and condition had improved beyond belief. I'm trying it now.

For 'reluctant bucks' a little hemp seed does the trick, for does, vitamin E (alpha tocopheryl) prevents abortion, increases fertility, and is an 'anti-ageing' vitamin, again obtained at health food stores.

I feed dandelion buds and clover flowers which the mice rip apart to get at the pollen and nectar. I never feed steam-baked bread unless it has been 'toasted' in the oven, as a few years back, when I had run out of my supply of oven baked bread, I fed for a fortnight on steam sliced type and found it caused enteritis, diarrhoea, bleeding, and the fading of mice. When Brian saw this happening he swore never to have any of that kind again!

You can always test whether bread is steam-baked or baked the old-fashioned way, by putting a small piece of each in a glass of water and leaving them for say five days, then squeezing out the surplus water. The steamed variety will look like cotton wool and smell terrible, and the baked variety when squeezed will crumble.

Another effect of steamed bread is that pregnant does swell up to bursting point as though they are filled with gas, and then just die. Maybe other fanciers have experienced these effects and will write about them.

I never use hay which is prepacked in plastic bags, because in changes of weather condensation occurs and makes the hay sour. The best hay is 'Clover Hay' but I haven't been able to buy any for about ten years. My father always used it and the mice ate every bit. It is nutritious and very economical.

A few days before a show, a few drops of cod liver oil, or linseed, mixed with the food gives the coat a lovely sheen, but it mustn't be overdone. Chop bones, bacon rind, chicken bones, mice relish, they pick the bones clean and it gives the mice something to gnaw during the day. I get bags of dog bones from the supermarkets—usually ten pence a bag—and hammer them into small pieces. The mice love the marrow.

Something must be done about show schedules

says G Harlow

RECENTLY I decided to check on how each section had fared at shows over a period. From the reports in FUR & FEATHER I listed each section at six shows—two championship shows, one annual cup show and three others. The shows listed are all based on 5p entry fee and the standard 30p, 20p, 10p prize money in breed and section challenges only.

At these shows Tans showed a loss at four and a profit at two, Marked lost at all six, Satins lost at three and made a profit at two (I could not find the results of the other show), AOV made a loss at all six. Selfs made a profit at five of the shows and although I could not find the results of the Airedale show I was present and know that a good entry had been received.

Members cannot agree that entry fees should be raised but I believe that something will have to be done because if it were not for the big duplicate classes getting good entries the clubs would go bust. It is a great pity that clubs have to rely on making a profit from the

catering side and raffles—or even on donations—to make the shows pay. And remember that you still have to take into account the supply of prize cards, judging slips, pen labels and other hidden extras. It is no wonder that clubs are running on very tight budgets.

There are two ways of alleviating the situation. Either entry fees must go up in the straight classes (thus upsetting a lot of exhibitors) or we must make the schedules smaller by putting more varieties in the one class. In my opinion unless something on these lines is done we won't have a mouse Fancy in a few years' time.

I have heard exhibitors say that they won't enter at a show unless there is a class scheduled for their breed or variety on its own. In reply to this I say that a win in a class with a lot of entries carries more prestige than a win in a class which has attracted only two or three. Besides the win from a large entry is eligible towards a championship claim.

AIREDALE, FEBRUARY 10 1979

	Entry	Entry fees	Prize money	Loss	Profit
TAN	108	540p	580p	40p	—
MARKED	83	415p	470p	55p	—
SATIN	64	320p	360p	40p	—
AOV	78	390p	450p	60p	—
SELF	Results not published				

CALDER VALLEY, NOVEMBER 25 1978

	Entry	Entry fees	Prize money	Loss	Profit
TAN	95	465p	540p	75p	—
MARKED	55	275p	470p	195p	—
SATIN	57	285p	180p	—	105p
AOV	65	320p	460p	140p	—
SELF	143	715p	600p	—	115p

MANCHESTER MOUSE CLUB, NOVEMBER 11 1978

	Entry	Entry fees	Prize money	Loss	Profit
TAN	42	210p	560p	350p	—
MARKED	20	100p	320p	220p	—
AOV	47	235p	510p	275p	—
SELF	157	785p	830p	45p	—
SATIN	Results not published				

BRADFORD CHAMPIONSHIP 1979

	Entry	Entry fees	Prize money	Loss	Profit
TAN	188	940p	540p	—	400p
MARKED	86	430p	480p	50p	—
SATIN	74	370p	380p	—	10p
AOV	98	490p	800p	110p	—
SELF	276	1380p	720p	—	660p

LONDON CHAMPIONSHIP 1978

	Entry	Entry fees	Prize money	Loss	Profit
TAN	131	655p	600p	—	55p
MARKED	59	295p	440p	145p	—
SATIN	73	365p	480p	115p	—
AOV	124	620p	720p	100p	—
SELF	181	905p	690p	—	215p

NATIONAL MOUSE CLUB ANNUAL CUP SHOW AT WHITBY, SEPTEMBER 23 1978

	Entry	Entry fees	Prize money	Loss	Profit
TAN	107	535p	790p	255p	—
MARKED	99	495p	580p	85p	—
SATIN	80	400p	410p	10p	—
AOV	91	455p	660p	205p	—
SELF	221	1207p	900p	—	307p

MIDLAND MOUSE CLUB

SINCE MY last club notes we have had our first show at the Village Hall, Twycross, which turned out to be very poorly supported as the entry was only 462. The club would have lost over £15 on this show but for a member paying the hall rent £5, best in show and all loss on prize money. All the exhibitors present spent well on the tombola, raffle and the refreshments so we came out on top.

I hope our next show which is on Saturday June 30 will be better supported as I am sure all the people who came to the first show enjoyed themselves and many of them said what a good hall it was and in a very good area. I will not report on who did the winning as the judges will be putting their show reports in FUR & FEATHER.

The judges for our June show are Mr G Lupton (Selfs), Mr J Hartley (AOV and Satins). I am awaiting confirmation of the judge to do Tans and Marked. The show will be advertised in FUR & FEATHER a bit nearer the time. I thank all who made donations in cash or helped in other ways which made it possible for me to get this club off the ground. They include N Davidson, J Strutt, J Hartley, Mrs D Cooper, K Blackford, G Moore, C Cole, Mrs I Day and the following who made donations at the show and later, I Davies, D Parkinson, D Taylor.

We are putting a show on at the Walsall show on August Bank Holiday so I hope we will get a good entry and good turn out of exhibitors.

G HARLOW, secretary

NATIONAL MONGOLIAN GERBIL SOCIETY

THE ANNUAL members' stock show will be held at Poynton on Saturday August 25, in conjunction with the open gerbil section of the Poynton annual show. It will be judged by David Robinson.

David was to have judged our show at Doncaster in January and was as disappointed as we were that the section had to be cancelled, so start planning your breeding now to ensure him a good entry. The open section will be judged by Andrew Amos who had also taken over from Keith Smith as section manager for the 'London' in October. We got many inquiries from the general public at Poynton last year plus a few new exhibitors so put your best stock on view there and help make our Fancy a little better known.

One of our members has offered a rose bowl to be called the Calderpark Rose Bowl to be awarded annually to the member who is judged to have made the greatest overall improvement in the black gerbil. Once the black is stabilised as a recognised type and colour and breeding freely the award can, with the committee's permission, be assigned to a particular show for the best black or something similar. It was felt that the bowl would commemorate the contribution of an outside body to our hobby and also reward conscientious breeders.

I am often asked what we call baby gerbils—are they called kittens as in rats, cubs as in many animals or perhaps pups as sometimes used in research papers? What do you think would be appropriate? Also, is the male a buck and the female a doe? It seems time to make some sort of decision on this.

News and views to be placed at 3 Tracks Lane, Billinge, Wigan WN5 7BL.
(Mrs) M BROOKES, secretary

WHEN WRITING TO ADVERTISERS
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Ailments in hamsters (Part 2)

Dennis Homes

THE SYMPTOM of a cold in a hamster is very similar to that of a human—wheezing, running eyes, nasal discharge and sometimes sneezing. The coat becomes open and appears dull. Isolation from the rest of the stock is of paramount importance as the virus is highly contagious. Clean bedding should be given and the cage should be brought into a warm, but well ventilated room. A mash made from 'Bemax' and warm milk is quite beneficial. Sometimes a bronchial condition can arise from a cold and if this is the case the animal should be seen by a veterinary surgeon, who may prescribe aureomycin or terramycin.

The cold virus that affects a hamster is the same as that which affects humans. If you happen to have a cold great care must be taken to ensure that you don't infect your stock. Wearing a mask over your nose and mouth at this time would perhaps be advisable. If a cold develops into pneumonia it is usually fatal in hamsters.

Sometimes a hamster may appear to have all the symptoms of a cold when in fact the condition may be an allergy. Very fine sawdust or dusty hay is quite often the cause, and the condition may be likened somewhat to hay fever. Changing the sawdust and bedding to that of a better quality will usually remedy the situation.

Constipation

The first indication of this condition is usually a reduction of absence of faeces in the cage. Sometimes the faeces that are present are small, hard and shrivelled. In severe cases the animal will sit hunched up with an open coat and the tummy will be hard and swollen. Constipation is often the result of the hamster eating too many pellets and not taking enough water. The provision of plenty of greenfood, dandelion and apple will usually remedy the condition. A very small pinch of epsom salts in the water

bottle may help, but it is best to first try the greenfood. Constipation has sometimes been the result of a hamster having an intestinal blockage caused through chewing cotton wool. Obviously cotton wool or any other form of wool bedding should never be given.

Diarrhoea

This is usually caused by either eating too much greenfood or eating food that has been contaminated. Obviously the need for hygiene must be observed and, as previously stated, infected animals must always be isolated. Clean bedding should be provided and only dry food given. Arrowroot or a little cornflower may be added to the food. Diarrhoea is often nature's way of dealing with an intestinal infection and in most cases the condition will cure itself within a few days.

Falls

In an average sized cage a fall could never really be of a serious nature. Most nasty falls take place when the animal is being handled. It is important that you should always hold a hamster over a table top because, unlike mice, they seem to be quite unable to judge heights. Extra care should be taken when handling young or nervous animals as they have a tendency to take a sudden leap. Pregnant females should always be held with extreme caution.

If you have a hamster that has suffered a fall and you suspect a broken bone, then you should immediately consult a vet. If a hamster shows signs of shock then he should be given a warm mash and left alone preferably in a warm place.

Hibernation

As with cannibalism, hibernation is more prevalent among certain strains of hamsters and may also be partly inherited. The condition is more likely to happen when temperatures drop below 45°F, although there have been cases of hamsters hibernating at much higher

temperatures. Heartbeat, temperatures and respiratory rate all drop drastically and the animal becomes quite stiff. Many a hamster found in this condition has been mistaken for dead.

The best treatment is to move the cage into a warmer room, but ensure that the change is gradual or the creature could die from shock. Gradually the hamster will come round and in no time at all will be acting quite normally. At this time a warm mash would be of great benefit.

Inability to give birth

A hamster has a double uterous and a baby passes into the birth canal in turn from each womb. The inability to give birth is usually caused by a baby turning and becoming lodged in the birth canal. Sometimes the condition can be attributed to too much fat around the uterous, making the birth difficult. Obviously a mother should be well fed, but it is imperative that she does not become too fat.

If a hamster is found in this condition it should be taken to a veterinary surgeon at once. If caught in time a caesarian birth may be possible. Unfortunately, in most cases it is fatal.

Loss of fur

As a hamster gets old it is perfectly natural for a loss of fur to be encountered. The first place that it becomes noticeable is usually on the ears, which become quite shiny. The belly fur also becomes rather thin, starting from the area around the pits of the leg joints. If a loss of fur is found on a young animal then it could be attributed to a deficiency of vitamin A or C. Plenty of greenfood and regular cod liver oil may be helpful. A small sprinkling on the food of a multi-vitamin compound such as 'SA37' or 'Abidec' may also be of use.

Black gerbils

MRS MINA HENLEY, on behalf of Calderpark Zoo, kindly gave me two pairs of black gerbils. These arrived straight from quarantine and appeared healthy. Despite this, one male died within three days from no obvious cause. The remaining pair gave no signs of wanting to breed with each other and eventually each of the blacks were paired with an agouti.

Two litters have been produced, one of four and another of six, all agoutis, the procedure is to inbreed these agoutis to recover the black. The black colour is inherited as a recessive, hence the expectation in the F2 in three agoutis and one black.

I have recently bred a 'waltzing' gerbil. This interesting little animal is healthy but tends to spin in circles when disturbed. It also circles spontaneously. I hope to determine if the behaviour is inherited. I should be pleased to hear from anyone who may have had or seen such behaviour. It should be added that this circling behaviour is not the same as the epileptic fits which most gerbils are prone. This tendency is probably related to their very quick and high-strung natures. ROY ROBINSON

Club secretaries

National Mouse Club: Mr S Smith, 26 Grasmere Road, Bolton, Bradford.
Airdale Mouse Club: John Kellest, 56 Claremont Grove, Wrose, Shipley, West Yorkshire, telephone Shipley (0274) 55621.
Calder Valley Mouse Club: E Longbottom, 109 Hopwood Lane, Halifax, Yorkshire, telephone Halifax 54 124.
Faywood Hamster, Mouse, Gerbil and Fancy Rat Club: Mrs F Johnson, 79 Burdett Avenue, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex.
Greater Manchester Mouse Club: D Taylor, 252 Stockport Road, Marple, near Stockport, Cheshire SK6 6EX. Telephone 061-427 2762.
London and Southern Counties Mouse Club: Eric Jukes, 26 Downs Road, Enfield, Middx EN1 1PB, telephone 01-366 6162.
Midland Mouse Club: C Harlow, 11 Holly Bank Estate, Austrey, Atherstone, Warwickshire.
North Yorkshire Mouse Club: Mrs N Horne, Edofiss, Echo Hill, Sleights, near Whitby, North Yorkshire YO22 5AE. Telephone: Whitby (0947) 810272.
National Fancy Rat Society: Joan Pearce, 57 Myrtledean Road, Abbey Wood, SE2.
National Mongolian Gerbil Society: Mrs M Brookes, 3 Tracks Lane, Wigan WN5 7BL.
Northern Counties Fancy Rat Society: Mrs H Dagg, 44 Bower Street, Mill Hill, Blackburn, Lancashire.
Yorkshire Hamster Club: Mrs E Baxby, 8 Rawlins Court, Coal Aston, Sheffield.
Midland Hamster Club: R Hegarty, 36 Welbeck Street, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire. Telephone: Mansfield 36580.
Southern Hamster Club: W Drake, Rosewood, 29 Bardenville Road, Canvey Island, Essex.

their stride as being part of the mad household that they live in!

I recently had to take one of my cats to the veterinary surgeon for an injection and as one of my buck rats had a couple of small sores, I thought that I would kill two birds with one stone, as they say, and take the rat with me. I put them both in the same basket. When I arrived at the veterinary surgeons and entered his surgery he could not believe his eyes and called in his other two colleagues to have a look. I felt rather like I was doing a circus act. Still it's all part of the publicity.

Which brings me to another subject of the publicity. When I started out to let everyone know via newspapers, radio and television about fancy rats I did not realise just what the effects it would have on my friends and neighbours. My neighbours haven't spoken to me since and have sent in three petitions so far to try and get rid of them. The Health Department have been about six times, till they finally got sick of the complaints and petitions and sent a letter to all my neighbours saying that the only reason that they could tell me to get rid of my stock was health reasons only, and as far as they were concerned they could see no reason at all. That stopped the petitions but then they started something else. I came home one day to find my sister-in-law's Jack Russell Terrier in my backyard with my Alsatian. I learnt that someone had thrown him over, as he was such a good ratter, in the hope that it would get mine! Unfortunately, my Alsatian was on heat at the time and as he couldn't get in the shed to my rats, he took my bitch instead! And the silly dog lay down to make it easier for him! So in about three to four months time if anyone wants a Jack Russell cross Alsatian puppy you know where to come! (Mrs) HELEN DAGG

Best friends

I THANK Roy Robinson for his interesting article. He just about sums up the intelligence and friendliness of the fancy rat and one wonders why it does not become popular. I have spoken to many a person, who has agreed that there are mice, rabbits, etc in the wild and there are also tame ones which can be kept as pets and become lovable members of the family. At the same time these people just cannot accept that there are rats in the wild and also tame rats that can become just as lovable members of the family. (I am beginning to wonder just who has the most intelligence and commonsense, the human being or the rat!)

Regarding the intelligence. I have recently found out that the intelligence of a rat can be greatly improved in the early days of its life before it leaves the nest. If young rats are handled for a minute or two each day from the day they are born they are subjected to a certain amount of stress which helps their brains to develop to a greater degree. This does not apply solely to rats, but to other mammals as well, mice and cats, etc. Also by repeated handling at this early age the rat learns that even though it is taken away from the warmth and comfort of the nest and its mother, it soon learns that it is only temporary and that no harm has come to it. Subsequently this makes for a much tamer rat.

I have heard one or two judges who have remarked that my eight week old rats which they have judged are extremely tame and have no skittishness about them.

My rats are also acquainted with my two cats and my dog as well. They will not harm them and my rats are not frightened. They love to be let in the house to play with the cats though they do sometimes take advantage by teasing them and pulling their tails and whiskers. But the cats don't seem to mind. They take it all in



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Where and when to show

HAMSTERS

JUNE 9
Pyrford
JUNE 30
Faywood
JULY 7
Aiton
JULY 28
Abergavenny Agric
AUGUST 25
Faywood
SEPTEMBER 1
Newport
SEPTEMBER 8
Leatherhead
SEPTEMBER 29
Lymington
OCTOBER 20
Faywood

OCTOBER 26/27
London Championship
Super Pets

NOVEMBER 10
Surbiton

MICE

JUNE 9
London & Southern
JUNE 10
Bradford Metro
JUNE 16
Calder Valley
JUNE 30
Faywood
JULY 14
Dagenham
JULY 22
Dartford
JULY 28
Cleveland County
AUGUST 5
Portsmouth
Southsea

AUGUST 25
Faywood

AUGUST 26
Harlow

SEPTEMBER 1
Guildford

SEPTEMBER 8
Airedale

SEPTEMBER 16
Bradford Metro

SEPTEMBER 22
Greater Manchester

OCTOBER 6
North Yorkshire

OCTOBER 13
Airedale

London & Southern

OCTOBER 20
Faywood

OCTOBER 21
Bradford Metro

OCTOBER 26/27
London Championship

NOVEMBER 10
Bristol

Southern CC

Brooklands SL3

Greater Manchester

London & Southern

NOVEMBER 18
Bradford Metro

NOVEMBER 24
Calder Valley

DECEMBER 1
Rugby

DECEMBER 8
London & Southern

DECEMBER 16
Bradford Metro

GERBILS

JUNE 30
Faywood

JULY 27
St Helens

AUGUST 15
Poynton

AUGUST 25
Faywood

SEPTEMBER 2
Birmingham

SEPTEMBER 9
St Helens

OCTOBER 20
Faywood

OCTOBER 26/27
London Championship

NOVEMBER 25
St Helens

RATS

JUNE 30
Faywood

JULY 15
Dagenham

JULY 28
Surbiton

AUGUST 25
Faywood

SEPTEMBER 29
Surbiton

OCTOBER 20
Faywood

OCTOBER 26/27
London Championship

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