

Feeding Mice by Ruth Hollis: "There are no secrets when it comes to feeding mice"



Mice are omnivorous, which means they will eat anything. The fact that the species of mouse we keep, *mus musculus*, is known as the house mouse indicates that it has largely evolved to eat same as humans, or at least to adapt to human food and household items.

There are many instances of mice living on an extremely restricted diet, for example mice which live in corn bins or grain stores. These mice thrive and multiply alarmingly, which implies they are receiving every required nutrient from their food source.

However, unless we know exactly what those nutrients are, it is safer for the fancier to give as varied a diet as is practical.

A deep knowledge of requirements is not necessary. No doubt significant scientific works exist which give in minute detail the nutritional requirements of the mouse down to the smallest detail. For the mouse fancier though there is no need to delve so deep. There are three key factors:

- **Quality:** I learnt this lesson once and for all when I showed my first mouse, under George Lupton at Brighthouse in 1983, a Silver Satin u8 weeks, which came third in a class of 3.

When, as is always recommended to a novice

fancier, I asked the judge why my mouse hadn't done better, he told me it looked as if it were poorly reared. After that I took steps to improve the quality of the food.

- **Quantity:** mice are very wasteful feeders – a fancier told me once they counted the sunflower seeds as there was a daily allowance for each mouse!

Much better to put in what you think is going to be twice as much as the mice can possibly eat, double that for feeding does, reduce it a bit for solitary bucks, and provided the quality is good your mice will be getting enough.

- **Variety:** variety is very important for ensuring the mice get everything they need. I have looked back and re-read several articles about feeding, prior to writing this one, but basically all say the same thing: variety in diet means everything necessary is likely to be available.

There are no secrets when it comes to feeding mice. No one food indispensable if its components can be provided from other source.

The following mixture will contain everything a mouse needs – and don't forget water, not a food but an essential item.

Oats, Sunflower, Hemp, Flaked maize, Flaked peas, Groats, Linseed, Wheat,

Canary seed, Millet, Nuts, Puppy meal, Poultry pellets, Rabbit pellets.

I have been told in the past that poultry pellets are not so good for mice as they contain traces of grit, essential for the poultry digestive system but detrimental for the mouse, but I have never found any problem.

It is really extremely unusual for a mouse in my shed to scour (maybe a dozen isolated occurrences in twenty years), and if it does its hours are numbered.

Bread is useful only as a medium for additives such as wheatgerm, full cream milk (baby formula ideal because convenient), cage bird soft food mixtures, linseed oil. The wheat which is the major constituent of bread is better in its unadulterated form.

Mice also like cooked rice; I'm not sure about pasta, but they probably like that as well. Rice and pasta though are only useful in small quantities as their food value is limited.

The following can be classified as treats (ie small quantities):

Biscuits, Crackers, Cakes, Breakfast cereals (not All Bran – no nutritive value), Cooked bones, especially chicken and fish which are soft, Cooked meat and fish, Egg, Dog and cat treats.

I don't feed everything in the above lists, but I do give most of it, and no doubt there are plenty of other foods given by other fanciers which are just as good. If you see a particularly fit mouse on the show bench, ask its exhibitor what he or she feeds, and if it suits you, incorporate it into your mixture.

In my experience mice don't like Chocolate, Dried fruit, Cheese.

They do like but shouldn't have Salt, Sugar (in isolation), Oily fatty stuff.

One very well known fancier used to empty past-its-best chip-pan fat into mouse food, which led to very greasy mice and a foul smell, but the mice didn't seem to suffer in the long run.

Mice don't need fruit/green food, though they like some of it, but it tends to cause diarrhoea.

It is nonsense in my view to talk about getting mice fit for showing, or having different feeding regimes for breeding, showing, growing on young stock.

This is far too time consuming, and not good for the stock to change diet when moving from one function to another. The aim should be for all mice to be in peak fitness all the time.

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