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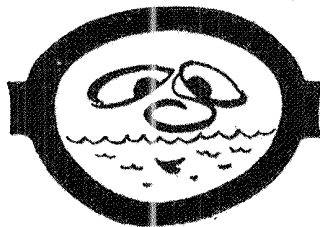
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Of Hamsters

By J. J. McCOY

Nature compensates for the hamster's relatively short life span (two to three years) by making this rodent a prolific breeder. Five litters a year are not unusual—and the average number of babies per litter is eight. Therefore, if you are planning to breed hamsters, be prepared for a population explosion!

Hamsters are not always congenial spouses; male and female will often fight. When mating them, always place the female in the male's cage. Otherwise the fur will fly. The female is very possessive about her home and will regard the male as an intruder.

Be sure the female is at least eight weeks of age at the time of her first mating. The male can be eight to 12 weeks old. If you think the female is receptive, put her into the male's cage in the evening. Watch the pair closely. Separate them if they fight and try again the next evening. As soon as they seem to be getting along together, leave them in the cage for about a week.

Feed the expectant mother properly. Hamster pellets, greens and milk will keep her in good health. A balanced diet will also help prepare her for the job of nursing the youngsters. The babies will be born approximately 16 days after mating.

Hamsters are born hairless. They are also very delicate. Try not to handle them, even if they become separated from the mother. She'll eventually gather up the strays. Don't be alarmed if you see a mother hamster carry her baby in her cheek pouch. It's a perfectly natural action: mother hamsters often tote their babies in the cheek pouches.

The Pet Forum

Q. "Does a goat make a good pet?" S.A.

A. Yes—but not in the city!

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If you have ample space, a goat can be an amusing pet. They are somewhat destructive and you'll have to keep your straw bales and other perishables out of their reach. Young goats have a strong curiosity and are forever poking into things. They have a affinity for heights, too. The ear and porch roofs are sure to attract them. If you want to keep a goat, my advice is to build an escape-proof pen. When you take the goat out of the pen, keep him on a tether or long leash.

Mr. and I

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