

## RATS LEARN HOW TO GROW UP EASTER

Can the ambition of children to "grow up" faster, and of all of us to be big and tall, ever be realized by a future generation? Perhaps, if human beings can learn the trick that seems to have been mastered by rats in the laboratory of Dr. Thomas B. Osborne and Dr. Lafayette B. Mendel at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. A breeding stock of experimental animals under their observation has "speeded up" the growing process by nearly a third during the past half-generation, the two scientists informed the National Academy of Sciences at its recent meeting.

"In the course of the past fifteen or more years we have had an opportunity to secure records of the rate of growth of several thousand rats under controllable conditions with respect to diet and environment," they said. "The animals have been bred from laboratory stock without any introduction of 'new blood' within the past ten years. The stock diet during this period has presumably remained essentially the same so that changes in the average rate of growth may perhaps be properly attributable to the effects of selective breeding in the attempt to secure vigorous animals for experimental use. A noticeable increase in the average rate of growth has in fact resulted. For example, the average time required by male rats to grow from two ounces to seven ounces body weight has gradually decreased; it was approximately 94 days in 1912; 89 days in 1913; 70 days in 1919; 67 days in 1925.

"From time to time we have observed instances of exceptionally rapid growth under conditions of diet and environment seemingly the same as those to which animals exhibiting the average rate of growth were subjected. This in itself indicates a possibility of largely accelerated growth that might be secured more generally if the underlying causes could be correctly ascertained. An outstanding illustration is afforded by rats - selected, it must be remembered, from our stock colony - that have grown from a body weight of two ounces to seven ounces in less than 25 days, in contrast with approximately 70 days usually required by comparable animals.

"It need not be assumed that food itself determines the rate of growth; it merely gives the natural growth impulse fair play in a way that may not always have been recognized hitherto. The maximum size of animals growing at these accelerated rates is in general not unduly large although frequently it has been decidedly larger than the average."

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In some European cities there are police officers who speak the international language Esperanto and who wear badges showing that they are Esperanto interpreters.

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Japanese children have raised considerable money for Red Cross enterprises by catching locusts, which are popular as food, and by destroying insect pests in rice fields.

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