

Russian blue hamsters

This story began in November 2010 when I noticed in an ordinary Moscow pet shop among other Syrians hamsters an animal whose colour I couldn't identify. It looked a lot like blue, but it had black staining all over his body making him look "marble". His eyes looked totally black, his ears were blue also with the marbling. At that moment I had no space in my hamstery for a new animal, but the temptation was so strong that I decided to return to the shop three days later and , if this enigmatic hamster is still there, to buy him. This I did and was pleased to find that although the other hamsters had been sold this one remained.

I called him Tim Taler. Here he is, just from the shop:



several months later:



Two months later I noticed, in another pet shop, a female of the same colour. I told this to my friend, also a hamster breeder who immediately brought the

hamster and called her Molly Moon.



Molly Moon had a surprise for us in that she soon gave birth to a litter of four. Two white ones (unfortunately they died while still in the nest), a black banded male and golden female La Souris Mirasol who came to me.

Five months later I paired Tim and Mirasol. Here is their litter, Homa Sapiens K:



I was excited to see that at least one baby has the same mutation as his father and grandmother. While the babies were growing, it was obvious that five of them have marbled coat shown by Tim and Molly. So, we had 12 young;

Four black,

Three golden,

A single animal the same colour as Tim and Molly (her eyes are neither black nor red, they look cherry-coloured at the first day but just in a few days turn black),



One Lilac looking, but with much darker ticking and also showing the marbling, and dark ruby eyes not red.



Three cinnamon-looking these had darker ticking, eyes and ears that you would expect from a “normal” coloured cinnamon. I thought that this had to be the basic colour of this new colour and have provisionally call it “Russian cinnamon” . This may need to be renamed at a later date when more information and studies have been undertaken.



The second Tim's litter (Point Barrow D) gave us a pleasant surprise, there were Russian blue and Russian cinnamon babies, though the mother (red-eyed off-white) didn't have this mutation. Obviously, the first thought we had was that the gene of Russian blue is dominant. But further investigations showed that everything was more complicated. I won't itemize here all the litters obtained within the framework of the project, but we ascertained its coherence with cinnamon.

In the litters of a Russian blue (Russian cinnamon etc.) and a red-eyed (cinnamon+) hamster all the babies are either red-eyed or Russian blues.

Pairing RBs to a cinnamon carrier we receive about 25% of RBs and 25% of cinnamon+ babies, while in pairings to a hamster who has no cinnamon gene neither cinnamon nor Russian blue appears.

These facts generated a new hypothesis: the marbled gene can be mutation in P-locus, recessive towards "normal" P but dominant towards cinnamon (p).

Though we don't write off the possibility that the gene is dominant but can only be seen on cinnamon-based colours giving a "shadowing" effect (such as, e.g., umbrous that changes a lot cream-based and yellow-based colours, can be seen on some agouti colours but can hardly be determined on such colours as dove or blonde).

Here are some colours obviously based on Russian blue that we managed to get during our investigation (the names for colours are provisional and can be changed).

"Russian blond" – Russian cinnamon+silver grey/light grey:



(Siriyskaya Zvezda Jorge Sand, courtesy of "Siriyskaya Zvezda")



(Itty-Bitty-Saurus Jan Valjan, courtesy of “Itty-Bitty-Saurus”)

Silver Russian blue:



(Zhionis WikiLeaks)



(Siriyskaya Zvezda Jemchuzhnaya Rossyp, courtesy of "Siriyskaya Zvezda")

And this male is quite different from the other "Russian blondes" we've seen, at first sight he can seem to be silver grey, but ruby eyes (he has no pattern) and typical "marbling" on his ears, and on his fur as well (it's difficult to notice now, but at the age of 7-14 days the patches were seen quite well) makes us think that he also has the Russian blue gene. Homa Sapiens Prince of Persia:



Several more interesting pictures illustrating Russian blue. Here is the litter Homa Sapiens R – dove, silver dove, dove tts, Russian blue tts and silver Russian blue (to compare the colours):



RB tortoiseshell



(Homa Sapiens Rumba, courtesy of "Zvezdny")

Comparing of Russian blue (on the right) with blue aadd (on the left):



(Zhionis Afrodita and Angel-Hranitel Nils, courtesy of “Lucky Hamster”)

One of the most important latest news in investigation of this colour was getting a homozygous Russian blue.



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(Neposeda Disney, courtesy of “Neposeda” and “Siriyskaya Zvezda”)

His phenotype doesn't differ a lot from a heterozygous form, but in pairing with a cinnamon+ female he gave a litter of RBs and Russian blondes only. Now we are on the way to find out if the gene is located in P-locus or not, for this we'll have to pair Disney with a black eyed female and then pair one of his black-eyed offspring with a cinnamon+ or carrier. If in the litter there are both RB and cinnamons - it's another locus, if there are only Russian blues and black-eyed babies - then almost certainly it's P-locus.

There are still lots of questions about this gene and its influence to other colours to be answered. I hope that more breeders both in Russia and in elsewhere will join this interesting investigation and together we'll reveal all its mysteries.

Daria Zueva,

breeder, hamstery “Homa Sapiens”