

AFA and Aviculture, Today and Tomorrow

by Laurella Desborough, AFA President
Martinez, CA

Today the officers of the American Federation of Aviculture are in the midst of working to change the organization for the better. We are working to improve services to members: individual members, club members and commercial members. In working to improve, we start from the position of our mission statement, "To promote the advancement of aviculture."

Our major efforts to promote aviculture have been and will continue to be by way of education—to provide our members with an informative journal, to present an outstanding annual conference, and to educate regulators and legislators about aviculture.

One aspect of improving membership services will be to make positive changes in the journal, in the annual conferences and in the legislative arena. As you will see in this issue of the *Watchbird*, new authors are making their debut. Steve Hartman has a column on indoor breeding facilities, Fred and Lyrae Perry have the first in a series of articles on the *Psittacula* genus, and Glenn A. Mitchell on the ever popular Canary.

Beginning in the March/April issue, Brian Speer, DVM, will begin a series of articles on flock management. Other new writers will be seen in upcoming issues.

In our next conference we are making major changes in the scheduling of speakers so that we may include daily working sessions. These workshops and special interest seminars will allow conference attendees to actively partic-

ipate in such important activities as understanding and working with incubators, hatching chicks, setting up effective nurseries, prevention of disease, and trouble shooting in the nursery. Other topics will include flock management, setting goals, increasing production, marketing, and finances. Several different daily workshops are planned. We will work with the leaders in different aspects of aviculture to bring the conference attendees the latest information and to provide situations where attendees can take part in interactive sessions in order to produce the greatest personal gain for each participant.

Regarding regulation and legislation, the AFA Board has supported the production and publication of the educational booklet, *The Birdkeeper's Legislative Handbook*. This booklet is designed to be of assistance to the individual bird owner in dealing with such problems as animal control officers who knock at the door because of an angry neighbor, or zoning issues, or proposed city or county restrictions on numbers or types of animals (birds) that may be legally kept. This handbook has already been of great assistance to me personally (and to many others) when animal control really did come knocking at the door. If you know your rights, you are much more able to protect your interests and your birds.

Also regarding regulation, the AFA Board has had the foresight to be very proactive in attending the CITES conferences and in sending the AFA CITES Committee Chairman, Alister McNabney, to two CITES Animals Committee meetings where he was the sole representative for aviculture. (Animal rights groups are present in great numbers at these meetings and pressing their ideas upon the committee members.)

Much of the important work of CITES takes place at the committee level where proposals are designed and later presented to the main CITES conference for approval. It is important that aviculture be represented at the committee level. This past September at the meeting in the Czech Republic, the AFA submitted two important documents which will improve the understanding of the decision makers at

CITES regarding aviculture.

CITES is an international treaty organization. CITES decisions and policies can affect U.S. aviculture. Some of the impetus to create the Wild Bird Conservation Act of 1992 (WBCA) in the U.S. originated out of CITES policies. Continuing pressure from the animal rights organizations demands that aviculture make its voice heard. It is extremely important that U.S. aviculture, represented by AFA, fully participate in the CITES processes, at both the decision making levels, the committee meetings, and the CITES conference.

On the national level, the WBCA is still in effect because it is an enacted law. Although the WBCA has not been reauthorized, reauthorization is not necessary for the WBCA to be enforced in the U.S. Without reauthorization and additional funding, however, the WBCA cannot be used to assist foreign countries in conducting field studies and setting up conservation programs.

The AFA will continue to monitor developments under the WBCA and also other national and state proposals regarding exotic birds.

The AFA Exotic Bird Registry was developed to provide a registry service to bird keepers making it possible for bird owners to register each new chick. We highly recommend that all bird owners take advantage of this registry service for their baby birds.

The AFA Board has endorsed the Model Aviculture Program as an effective means of certifying bird breeders' facilities and record-keeping. MAP is a separate non-profit entity and is not associated with the AFA other than being an affiliate like any other society or organization.

Bird keepers and breeders now have available to them the use of the AFA Registry service and the MAP inspection and certification service. Both of these services provide aviculturists with increased professionalism. These two private sector services make it unlikely that the government will mandate a federal registry and a federal inspection program. By supporting these private sector programs, aviculturists help maintain our independence from government control. ➔