



Model Aviary Program

by Laurella Desborough, Concord, CA

Conceived in 1984, developed during the next five years, and established in January, 1990, the Model Aviculture Program is almost nine years old. MAP is basically a service organization for aviculturists. This program of voluntary inspection and certification has been utilized by bird breeders working with species from finches to macaws, and from pheasants to owls. MAP certified bird breeders have included those with small backyard flocks, small indoor flocks, large outdoor bird barns, outside aviaries, and flocks housed in standard insulated buildings.

Some of these bird breeders want to keep a low profile and do not want any information published about their location or their breeding operation; MAP keeps their confidence. Other breeders want to advertise their birds for sale; MAP provides on request their name, phone/fax/e-mail and the species they list for sale. MAP does not give out their addresses. Some zoos want to sell their surplus stock to bird breeders with good management practices and accept MAP certification as a qualifier for receiving zoo surplus birds. MAP provides these zoos with the name and mailing address of those MAP participants who choose to be on the zoo list.

You may request information on MAP via mail, fax, phone and, eventually, via e-mail. MAP has provided basic information on the program, including the guidelines, to Canadian and Australian avicultural organizations. MAP has also presented information on the program to various departments and agencies in several states and to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Washington, D.C. (in 1995 during a hearing on the Wild Bird Conservation Act) to indicate that the private sector has established a program to self-regulate and does not need federal regula-

tion and inspection of aviaries.

MAP is designed to improve flock management. MAP originated out of the recognition by bird breeders and avian veterinarians that the National Cage and Aviary Bird Improvement Plan, (NCABIP), did not focus on the needs of the bird keepers or the birds, but on protecting the public and the poultry industry from potential harm from exotic bird diseases. In designing MAP, the focus was on standards to improve the care of the *birds*, thus increasing successful production for the bird keepers. MAP is about successful flock management. Period.

The concerns of the humane community and the government agencies have also been addressed. Good flock management practices include in their very conception humane practices: orderliness, cleanliness, healthy diets, proper housing, record-keeping, and protocols for handling that prevent the spread of disease. State and federal agencies with oversight on the environment, wildlife, and agriculture are extremely concerned about alien or invasive non-native species. MAP addresses this concern through the absolute requirement for a safety system for MAP certification. This requirement, although it is very simple, has often been misunderstood by bird keepers, especially those with outdoor flights. The focus here is on preventing the escape of birds. This can be achieved through a safety aisle or entry outside each aviary structure, through special feed drawers on outdoor cages, and through moveable safety enclosures used during handling or treatment of birds in outdoor flights. Birds housed in cages inside buildings are automatically within a safety system.

The second basic requirement for MAP certification is a functional record-keeping system. It is, perhaps, considered by many aviculturists to be the most disagreeable activity related to bird keeping. However, the need for record-keeping is basic to a successful bird breeding operation. Without records, you cannot adequately monitor the production of pairs, the development of chicks, the genetics in pairing, the expenses and income, and information on buyers and sales. You cannot manage bird breeding in a busi-

ness-like manner without records.

MAP is not concerned with the method of record keeping, except that the method should be workable. Records may be kept on 3x5 cards, in notebooks, in file folders, in computer programs or in any combination of these methods. Keeping records involves the ability to identify individual birds by the use of such things as leg bands or microchips and notation of the cage location. Keeping records also involves a method for identifying individual cages or flights along with a diagram of their location. Keeping records also includes providing a sales contract to buyers and information on the care of the birds they have purchased. Bird keepers who have put in place a complete record keeping system find that the time they spend in completing daily chores is reduced and their general flock oversight is improved.

MAP provides a set of guidelines and a sample inspection form to applicants so they can prepare for inspection. The guidelines are focused on good flock management practices. After the applicant is ready, the applicant selects a veterinarian of his or her own choice to perform the inspection of the aviaries, the safety system, the flock management practices, and the record-keeping system. Upon completion of the inspection form, the veterinarian sends it to the MAP office where it is processed. Successful applicants receive an individually numbered certificate and a packet of record-keeping forms, sample contracts and a set of MAP logos for use in advertising. New applicants are certified for one year. After the second year certification, renewals are every two years at half the original fee. The inspection form and application do not involve information on species or numbers of birds kept. MAP also does not require that only one set of management practices are acceptable; MAP approves a variety of aviary management practices as long as basic standards are met. There are many ways to successfully keep and breed birds. For a copy of the MAP guidelines and further information contact:

**MAP, P.O.Box 817, Oakley, CA 94561
ph.: 925-684-2244 • fax 925-684-2323**

Search *avian* and *map* on the internet for MAP's upcoming web-site. 