**Questions and Answers**

Edited and Researched by Richard Tkachuck, Ph.D.
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Perhaps the most enjoyable part of this column is to receive letters from individuals offering suggestions, advice and information. It is this type of sharing that makes meeting the deadlines posed by our sadistic editor bearable. So for my own survival, let’s hear from you often.

Some old business. A Ms. C.W. writes from Virginia concerning a question in the June/July issue which dealt with the different mates, etc. I

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**Question:** Is there any way to stop a cockatiel from laying eggs? The bird refuses a mate and has been laying 4-6 eggs every other month for 6 months! I’ve tried three different mates, etc. I just want her to stop. Also, can any health problems arise from laying so many unfertile eggs?

**Answer:** I wish that I had a bit more information. Are the eggs laid in a nest box? You imply that mates are refused. Is this because you have never seen mating or because the female drives off the males? Do you remove the eggs from the nest box after you see they are unfertile? Some suggestions. If eggs are laid in a nestbox, let them be incubated as long as the hen will sit. Eventually, most birds realize they are sitting on something that is not going to hatch. My personal theory for which there is no proof is that, as the eggs spoil, an odor is given off that is a cue to the bird to depart. Anyway, removing the eggs as soon as they are laid only stimulates more laying. Are you sure it is not your female who has a fertility problem? Is your bird kept outdoors or indoors under artificial light? If under artificial light, it may not be getting the correct seasonal cues regarding when to lay and when not to. Perhaps letting the sun shine on the bird will help get its yearly rhythm better in line. Finally, if the bird is laying eggs with firm shells it is probably not hurting itself too much, but, to be sure, is under some stress. Write again with more details and give me another shot at it.

**Question:** We have acquired a male cockatiel with a scissorbill. What causes this? If the bird is bred and young result, can be manage to feed them adequately? [Adequate food and care next described. Ed.] Can we eventually straighten out his bill?

**Answer:** There are two possible causes for the scissorbill. The first is genetic. A number of species of birds in your area (crossbills) have such a condition naturally. If this is the case with your bird, then there is not much you can do except a constant trimming and reshaping. The other cause is that the bill got a bad start when the bird was young. Perhaps the lower bill was broken and the upper bill grew badly. With this situation there is some hope for corrective action. Perhaps your best mode of action is to take the unaffected bill and file it in such a way so that the affected bill is corrected by coming in contact with the unaffected. In other words, create contact points on the two bills in the opposite direction. The shape of teeth, bills or any renewable living surface is determined by the type of contact it has. And only a small amount of pressure is necessary. My daughter’s mouth is being reshaped by some small rubber bands. It does not take much force to change shape, only the correct contact or pressure points. As far as breeding is concerned, unless you are sure that the problem is not genetic, I would not recommend any breeding. If it is the
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