Coming inland from the foggy coastline of Ventura County, California the sun glows on the peaceful valley of Ojai. It is here that Mr. and Mrs. Jack Chapman have found their retirement home and here they have built a haven for their Budgerigars.

Jack Chapman, a retired school teacher, has been breeding show budgies since 1953 and is an American Budgerigar Society licensed judge. He has spent years developing a genetic lineage that produces some of the best show stock in the country, as proven by the trophy and ribbon display in the Chapman’s living room.

The budgerigar house was designed and built by Jack with help from some friends. Flights were built along the southern wall of the building, and measure 12’ long x 4’ wide x 8 1/2’ sloping down to 6 1/2’ high in the back. Each flight comfortably houses 35 budgies (either young or off-season breeding stock). The south wall is lined with 3’ wire windows and left open to light and air. In the winter, Chapman covers this area half of the way down. Natural light is supplemented with ceiling lights which are left on the same timer year round and go off at approximately 9:00 p.m. The lights do not alter daybreak in the morning.

On the north end of the building, 30 breeding cages are arranged, each measuring 24” x 18” x 18”. Nest boxes are 10’ deep, 6 3/4” wide and 9” high and are painted with white gloss which makes them easy to clean. Ventilation holes on the sides help to keep the boxes dry. There are reversible trays in the bottom of the boxes to make for easy cleaning with minimal disturbance in between clutches. Each cage has a wire shelf placed a couple of inches off the floor, which have a dual purpose; offering a place for the seed jars to sit with hulls falling below and providing protection for fledglings if and when their parents start to become aggressive (especially the father) when going back to nest.

The floor of the budgie house is cement with a 2” slope to the back of the flights which allows complete hosing out. Twice a year the birds are removed from their flights and all of the flights are completely scrubbed and hosed out.

The Chapman budgies are offered a diet of canary seed, white proso millet and small red and white millet. The seeds are kept in separate feed-
ers (except for the red and white millet which are mixed). Breeding birds and young (until about four to five months of age) are fed sprouted oats with a pinch of Petamine and a pinch of raw, grated carrots. Swiss chard, grown in the Chapman garden, is also offered. No store bought greens are fed because, even though washed, Chapman feels that insecticides may still remain in the food. Grit is offered at all times to all birds.

Chapman has set up a tube watering system. The dark tubing helps minimize bacteria and there is a drain at the end to allow flushing. The system is completely cleaned once a year and each nozzle thoroughly cleaned with a Q-tip and alcohol. The tubing itself is soaked in bleach water.

Ideally, Chapman likes to have 65 to 70 hens and 40 to 45 males to choose from for breeding. Pairs are set up during the weekend of Thanksgiving. Square perches (1/2" x 1/2") are used in the breeding cages. Chapman uses a colored dot method to mark his nestboxes for immediate record keeping. Green dots indicate that a hen is laying eggs; red signifies that the pair is sitting on fertile eggs; and blue dots show that the babies are hatching. Breeding season ends when the heat comes with summer.

When babies are weaned, they are all placed in a 4’ cage with a show box attached. Spray millet and oats are placed inside the box to lure the babies in. The babies remain in this environment for three to four weeks before being turned into a flight. This way all of the budgies are introduced and grow accustomed to a show box early on.

Southern California is one of the most competitive areas in the country for showing budgies, so Chapman chooses his show stock very carefully. Birds are placed in show boxes, trained to take proper stance on the perch and then watched as if being judged in a show. The birds are lightly misted to encourage preening and enhance the sheen on their feathers prior to a show.

Chapman’s latest “pet” project is a crossing of the clear-winged and spangle mutations. For this, he is working with blue budgies and resulting in a deep blue or cobalt-bodied bird with white wings. Although these birds are not yet developed to show standards, the colors are striking and Chapman is very happy with the result. He hopes to have a good quality show bird, both with color and in body-type within the next two to three years.
The Watchbird offers free publicity for member club bird shows by announcing the dates and locations of the shows. To have your show listed it is necessary to get the data to the Watchbird four to five months before the show date. For example, if your show takes place the first week of October, it should be listed in the August/September issue. The deadline for that issue is June 1st. (Copy/article deadline is two months preceding publication date.)
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