

# Canary Calendar

by Charlotte Nierenberg



**"NOW IS THE TIME FOR ALL GOOD MEN TO COME TO THE AID OF THEIR" — CANARIES!!**

Charlotte Nierenberg

Despite a divergence of opinion as to the time of the year when canaries should be paired for breeding, ultimately it is the hen that decides the issue. However, assuming that she is mature enough, a breeder can help hasten the normal process by offering extra rations of food rich in protein and Vitamin E, lengthening the daylight hours by means of an inexpensive timer to gradually extend artificial lighting into the evening until about 8:30 or 9 p.m. and by providing a little extra warmth. "Mother Nature can be fooled" and she doesn't seem to mind a bit!

It would be presumptuous of me to suggest that any particular time of the year would be right or wrong for the start of breeding. The correspondence received from various parts of our vast country indicates that successful breeding is accomplished during any six-month period of the year.

However, serious breeders throughout the country exhibit their birds from October through December and therefore start breeding operations in February or March.

I realize there are commercial-type breeders who give a minimum of food and care to their birds and still produce baby canaries. However, through the years I have personally compared the differences in obvious visual health, feather texture and percentages of fatalities between those who "won't pamper their birds" with hobbyists who add vitamin supplements, maintain clean facilities and generally breed for quality in addition to quantity.

## FOOD FOR CONDITIONING

Starting in December, my birds receive rations of the same condition/nestling food they will feed to their babies throughout the breeding season. For a few birds, any good brand will suffice. For a medium to large flock it is perhaps more economical to mix your own combination of essential ingredients in larger amounts for ready availability. (My own "recipe" is available upon request.)

Extra protein in the form of strained, hardboiled eggs, mixed with bread crumbs, arrowroot baby biscuits (crushed) and prepared baby cereal can be offered in small amounts daily. Vitamin E can be provided by adding one drop of Wheat Germ Oil to a teaspoonful of egg food per bird or by using Wheat Germ Meal in the condition food.

Song food or niger seed, relished by most birds, will help prevent egg binding since it is rich in oil. Fresh greens should be a part of the daily diet throughout the year and should be continued during the conditioning period. The only time I withhold greens is during the 14-day period of incubation and until the babies are four days old. During the incubation period, rich food should also be kept to a minimum.

Since canaries have individual tastes and preferences, many will not eat what is good for them—very much like humans. For this reason, I prepare a mixture of ground cuttlebone, crushed, boiled and oven-dried eggshells and a sprinkle of coarse salt to be added to their regular dishes of canary gravel. Since they must eat gravel in order to digest their seed, some extra minerals will be consumed which will help to avoid the possibility of soft-shelled eggs.

There are well-meaning novices who "over-vitaminize" their birds by adding vitamin supplements in every possible form—at the same time. There is certainly no excuse for mixing the rank-tasting cod liver oil in the seed in these enlightened times. Again depending upon the amount of birds bred, supplemental vitamins may either be added to the

water tubes in water-soluble form or mixed into the seed in powdered form according to directions on the container label.

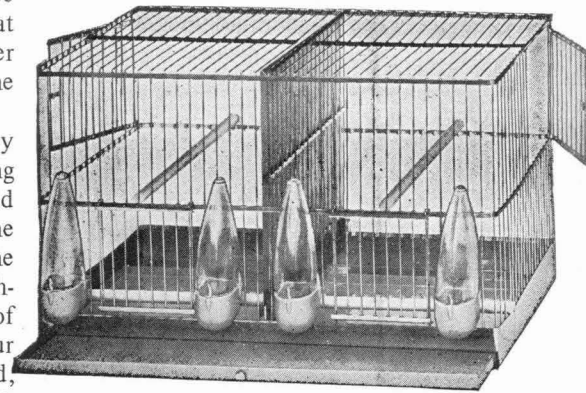
## CAGE FACILITIES FOR BREEDING

For the benefit of those who are completely new at breeding and "know not where to start" I would like to discuss the different types of facilities available.

Like newlyweds setting up house-keeping on a limited budget, it is possible to exist on necessities only. Similarly, raising canaries can be started with a small amount of equipment, adding the "extras" as time goes by.

For a first attempt, your canary's present cage can be used with the addition of a small, inexpensive cage for separating the birds when necessary. If the two cages are attached with entry doors on the same level (one door lifted and secured open with wire), the cock can feed the hen and eventually the babies through one set of bars.

A costlier (but far more desirable) arrangement is an ample-sized double breeding cage.

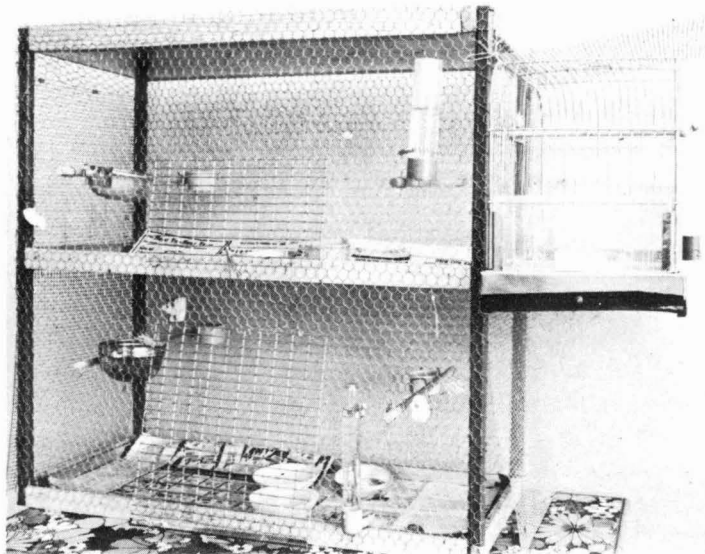


Double Breeding Cage

A two-section cage has a sliding wire divider which makes it a simple task to separate the birds or babies during the breeding cycle. Two lower center doors and two in the rear on the upper level provide easy access to the nest and inside of the cage for food placement and cleaning.

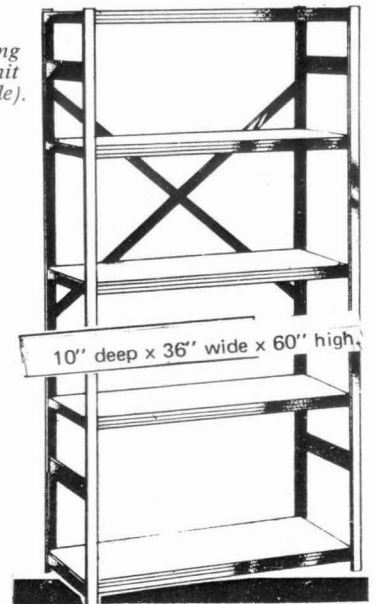
Another alternative which is fairly inexpensive but requires some modifications on the part of the breeder is a wooden or metal bookshelf which can be purchased in a hardware store.

If the metal unit is used and turned upside-down, narrow wood strips can be glued to the "lips" of the shelves. When the glue is thoroughly dry, aviary netting or hardware cloth (1/2") can be stapled to all the strips, completely enclosing the unit. Entry doors can be cut and reattach-



A free-standing metal unit (shelves are adjustable).

A two-tiered metal shelf, enclosed with aviary netting. Access doors were cut on the front and sides. A small nursery cage was hung against the side of the top tier (lifting the side door of the breeding cage). The nursery cage was attached so that the sliding tray could be used conveniently. The entry door opens on the far side (away from the breeding cage) so that food could be inserted and removed easily.



ed per the illustration.

If the large, free standing unit is chosen, the bottom can become a convenient storage space for seed, water and other necessities, saving many steps during the busy season.

One inconvenience when using such a unit for breeding is the lack of a sliding tray. However, this difficulty can be overcome by stacking cut newspapers under the perches on both sides and lifting one

piece out as necessary. There is room in the center for the various food dishes which will not be fouled by droppings from the perches on either end.

My thanks to the many canary enthusiasts who took the time to write with suggestions and queries on specific problems. (All have been answered directly.) Some related woeful tales of poor results last season. Every breeder's hope is a "bumper crop" of beautiful, healthy

canary babies. I feel compelled to warn the novice to buy his canaries from a reliable breeder or dealer whose birds are at least in good visible health. Any canary who sits "puffed-up" on a perch or is listless and apathetic or who wheezes is just not a good candidate for breeding! Conversely, a cock who is bursting with song, mated with a hen who flies pertly from perch to perch will usually be eager to breed and produce healthy young.

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