

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY AVICULTURISTS UNDER FIRE

by Jerry Jennings

Two backyard aviaries on a half acre lot, owned by A.F.A. members Mr. and Mrs. George Turner in Northern California's Contra Costa County, are the center of a controversy arising from a neighbor complaint. The complaint has evolved into an order by the County Planning Department requiring the Turners to get rid of their birds within 30 days. That order was issued last November, but the Turners did not give in and still have their birds.

The zoning ordinance under which the County Planning Department claims authority, is ambiguous at best. Only under agricultural zones does the zoning code mention the word "aviaries". Consequently, the Planning Department has interpreted the omission of the term from other codes as evidence aviaries are therefore prohibited. Not so say the Turners, and A.F.A. agrees.

The Turners have circulated a petition supporting their cause. They are petitioning the County Board of Supervisors to either interpret the law in their favor, or to amend the law to allow aviaries.

The Turners have retained the services of an attorney and may pursue the matter in court if necessary ■

SUGGESTIONS FOR "CONTROL" RECORDS

An uncomplicated and perhaps the most popular method of control used by canary breeders is to attach an index-type card to each cage noting pertinent information thereon.

My system is a little more detailed and perhaps would appeal to the "medium-sized" breeder:

I use a loose-leaf notebook and after the season, the pages are bound and filed away for reference, if needed.

The first page is my "Master Control Record" on which the first column is used to number my hens consecutively. I try to retain the same number for my older hens each year and these numbers are also used in bold black marking ink on each breeding cage.

The headings above the other columns are as follows:

HEN NO. — BAND NO. — Type/Descr.
Age Cock No. No. Eggs — 1st Clutch Due
2nd Clutch Due

On the opposite page, I list my cocks similarly, omitting the number of eggs and due dates, cross-referencing the cocks to the hens with which they mate.

On the next page, I list the new babies chronologically AFTER THEY HAVE BEEN BANDED. This page enables me to keep an accurate, running record of the produce of the season and also cues me to the important milestones of their early lives — at six weeks they are ready for an adult diet, at sixteen weeks all should be finished with the "baby moult" and are considered reasonably mature.

The headings used are as follows:

Date Hatched
Band No.
Hen No.
Cock No.
Type/Col.
Spec. Mk
Poss. Sex
30 Days
Six Wks
16 Wks.
Remarks

Although additional records are not absolutely necessary, I like to know the habits of my hens and how they perform. Therefore, I set up a page for each hen, noting her Master Control number, her band number and the cock she was bred with, on top of the page. Under these headings, I record such information as when she was placed with the cock, when she laid her first egg, how many eggs, her due date, etc. Other information is noted when deemed necessary. Many times I switch eggs or tiny babies for fostering to another hen and do not like to rely on memory alone.

I "flag" the cages, using differently colored clothespins for reminders since all the hens, naturally, do not hatch their clutches of young at the same time. One color cues me to the fact that these cages have babies requiring soft egg food, another color denotes that the hens are laying eggs and require removal and replacement with "dummy eggs," etc.

BUSY SEASON HINTS

1. Keep a bottle of water and a container of seed in the birdroom for easy refills. Try a combination "bottle 'n nipple" baby brush for at least a once-a-week scouring of water tubes and their plastic bottoms.
 2. Use an inexpensive timer to turn your lights on about 5:30 a.m. and off at 8:30 p.m. (Tiny chicks will have a much better chance for survival waiting only nine instead of 12 hours for their morning feeding.) Keep a small green or blue night light burning at all times to enable the hen to find her way back to the nest at any time during the night.
 3. Use "cafe curtain clips" to hold cage doors open or closed if necessary.
 4. Tie a few 3½" burlap strands together and attach above each perch in the weaning cage. Mischievous youngsters will be diverted from the habit of "tail plucking".
 5. Try MacDonald's coffee stirrers for possible hand-feeding of neglected chicks.
- Best wishes to all breeders for MANY HAPPY "RETURNS" this breeding season! ■

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