

# Canary Calendar

by Charlotte Nierenberg

(Mrs. Nierenberg is the author of "So You Want to Breed Your Canary!" and countless articles on canary care and breeding. She will gladly answer questions through this column and by mail. For a personal reply, please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope to her at P.O. Box 2095, Sepulveda, Calif. 91343.)

## "WAIT 'TIL NEXT YEAR!"

The old Dodger cry seems particularly opportune at this time of the year when canary breeders and their birds definitely need and deserve a rest!

If a pair of canaries has raised two successful clutches, it is sometimes a temptation to allow a third. However, since the breeding cycle takes its toll (especially on first-year birds) a third nest should be discouraged. If a previous try resulted in clear or unhatched eggs, the pair may be permitted to try again.

Since parent canaries usually start moulting at the end of the breeding

cycle, there is always the danger of entering this phase while raising a third clutch. They might try to perform the necessary duties, but fail at a crucial point if their strength ebbs.

The following are questions received recently and their answers:

**Q:** My January-hatched baby canaries started to moult in March. Do they moult again in August since they were hatched so early?

**A:** As a general rule, both adult and baby canaries moult once a year. There are exceptions, but a "false" moult should be viewed with suspicion. An "out of season" moult could result from hanging the cage too high in a heated room or indicate that the bird is in poor physical condition. Hens that lose feathers just before the breeding season are generally not good candidates for mother-

hood.

**Q:** When can I consider a young bird mature enough to sell?

**A:** It is my personal opinion that when a bird reaches four months of age (16 weeks) he can be considered a young adult. By this age most have completely finished moulting. The young cocks should be in full song and both sexes flying strongly and in obvious good health.

Why selling as a pet, the buyer should be cautioned to:

1. Duplicate the same feeding schedule and food for awhile.
2. Acclimate the bird to outdoor conditions slowly (if he has been raised indoors).

Most birds will make the transition to new quarters safely. However, some new owners admit "they have not had a bird since childhood" and welcome a list of instructions and a small amount of seed. I've had people buy canaries who "never heard of a cuttlebone" and others who were amazed to learn that gravel was a necessary part of a bird's diet!

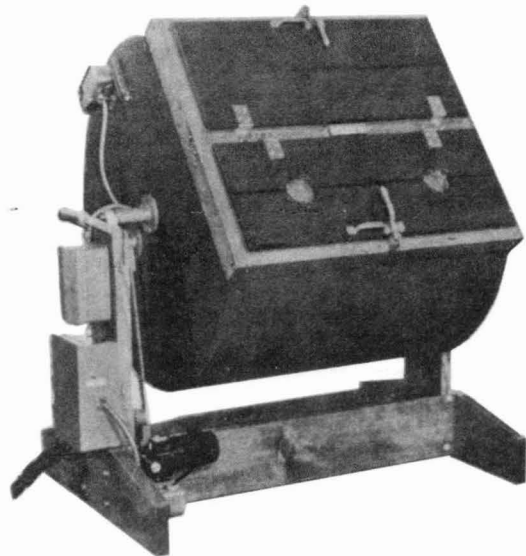
## HOUSING SUGGESTIONS AFTER THE BREEDING SEASON

It is a hopeful assumption that after two clutches, the breeder will be the proud owner of his original pair plus

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about eight young canaries. If the novice starts with three or four pairs and has a "bumper crop" there will definitely be a need for additional quarters.

I would like to share the plans for my "indoor flight cage on wheels" which has proven to be an invaluable aid in my bird room for the last three years. To encourage the many gal breeders, I constructed this cage alone in one (long) afternoon! True, I used precut lengths of lumber and plywood. It is admittedly simple in design but canaries do not need frills — just a simple enclosure.

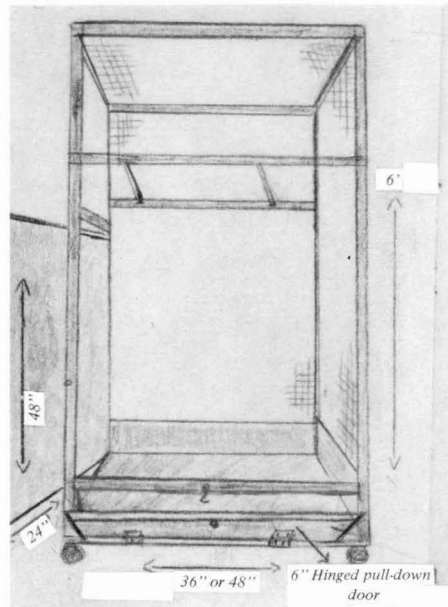
Materials used for the frame were standard, precut lengths of 2x2 lumber. The 1/8" plywood for the floor and door may also be purchased in standard 2x3 or 2x4 ft. sizes.

The finished product is self-standing, 2x3x6 ft. high and has a six-inch plywood shield around the bottom. The front shield is hinged and pulls down for ease in changing newspapers and food.

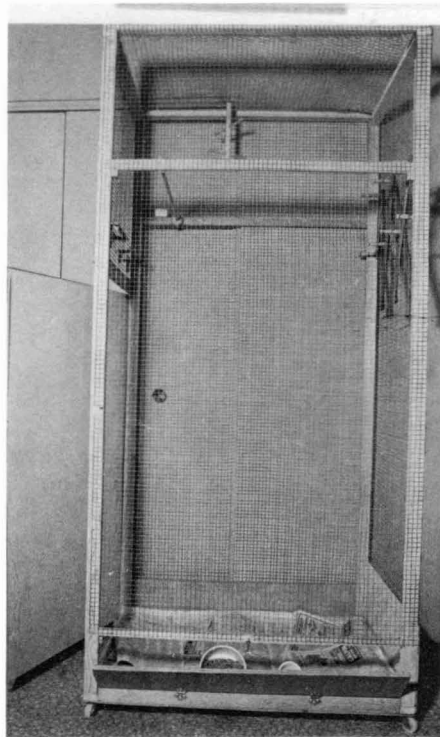
A last-minute idea was to attach swivel-type wheels on the bottom four corners to accommodate the inevitable "switching cages around" that goes on in my bird room. Hardware cloth was stapled to the frame (less expensive 1/2" aviary netting can be substituted).

The exercise value of the cage in an upright position accommodates about 20 small birds comfortably, since birds fly horizontally. However, it takes little room, needs no base and does accustom the young birds to outdoor aviary conditions by learning to "swoop" down the six-foot length for their food.

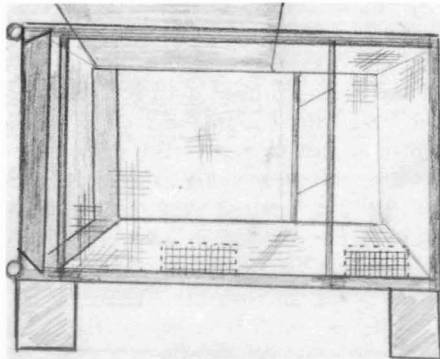
Last year I had more time to switch eggs and tiny babies and enjoyed a "baby boom". I was desperate for more flight room since the weather outdoors was not stable enough to permit the last transi-



*Drawing and plans for flight cage on wheels.*



*Photo of the finished cage.*



*Drawing of cage placed in horizontal position.*

tion of the young birds for a summer of aviary flying.

I placed the above-described cage in a horizontal position (door on top) and used four cement blocks for a base.

Some modifications were necessary, of course. The hinged, pull-down shield became an access door on the left-hand side. Since this was the only comfortable source of entry, two more doors were cut — one in the lower center and the other on the extreme right-hand side. The openings were cut large enough to permit the entry of large pyrex pie plates for community baths and for ease in changing large sheets of newspaper.

A few extra perches were added, staggered at different heights across the wide, six-foot expanse. As each clutch of birds reached the age of six weeks, they were transferred to this large flight and remained there until the feathers stopped flying and the weather outdoors warmed sufficiently for the final transfer.

In this position the cage capacity was doubled, and I was able to house approximately 40 birds at one time! ■

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