

Canary Culture

by Tony Bucci

About the beginning of June canaries begin to show signs of molt, and this is the time to begin color feeding.

Although a very controversial subject, color feeding has been practiced by canary breeders for centuries and it is practiced presently with more modern ways and means.

Carotene is a crystalline pigment found in the carrot and other plants and in animal tissue. This pigment is mainly yellow in colour, and some such as B-carotene, is orange in high concentrations.

The recently discovered carotene-CANTHAXANTHIN is bright red in high concentrations.

"Canthaxanthin" was discovered in 1950. It was extracted from pink edible

mushrooms. Since then it has been found in green algae daphnia, brine shrimps, and various species of birds. Canthaxanthin is the main pigment in the feathers of pink flamingo species, Roseate spoon-bill, Scarlet Ibis, American Vermillion Fly-catcher and Virginia Cardinal.

The aquatic species mentioned above feed mainly on daphnia, brine shrimps and other crustacea from which they obtain the canthaxanthin. Synthetic canthaxanthin has been produced on a commercial scale since 1964. It is used in poultry industry as a feed supplement to improve color of egg yolk. It is also used in human food as a coloring agent, for example tomato soup and margarine.

Most world zoos use canthaxanthin

as a color food for certain birds and it is probably the only way to keep the bird's natural red color.

This same carotene-canthaxanthin is now available to canary breeders under several names and is sold by several distributors. It is very expensive per pound, but relatively inexpensive to enhance color in canaries. If done properly, you need only 2 ounces to color feed fifty canaries for a period of two to three months.

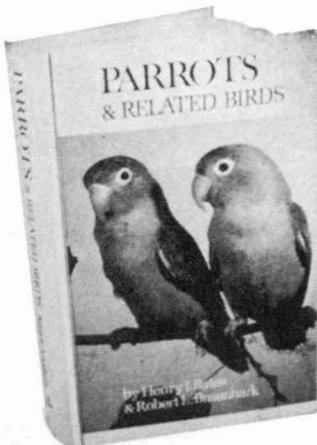
Here are two sources where I purchased carotene-canthaxanthin recently: Greater North American Color-Bred Judge Assoc., 136 Murray Street, Elizabeth, N.J. 07202

Justamere Bird Ranch, 1402 S. Myrtle

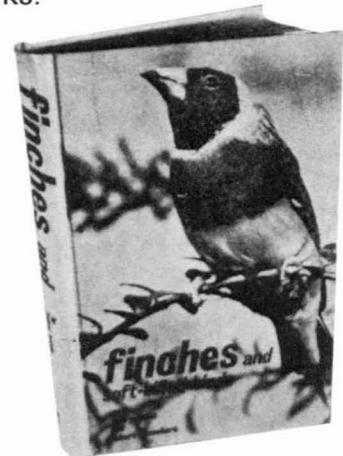
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We administer carotene-canthaxanthin in the drinking water. You must remove all of the drinking water giving only the treated water to the birds. The drinkers we use are sized according to the number of birds to be served. We use the standard glass spout with the rubber stopper used for hamster drinkers. These rubber corks with the glass spout can be purchased in any pet shop. By selecting the size of the bottle to last one day, birds will get fresh treated water every day, also this type of drinker will keep water clean.

One half teaspoon of powdered carotene-canthaxanthin will make one gallon of solution. Unused solution is kept in the refrigerator and placed in the drinkers daily.

To hold the bottle next to the cage simply make a loop of wire and attach each end to the cage side. Pop bottles also make good drinkers for this use. Green or other color tinted bottles will protect the solution from damaging sun rays.

It is recommended to start color feeding just before the molt starts, and it must be continued every day until the end of the molt. If the color feeding is interrupted, uniformity of color throughout the body will not be achieved. Areas of different color intensity will be evident.

I must mention that young birds which are experiencing their first major molt will not get their flight and tail feathers colored. The reason for this is because young birds in their first year of molt do not shed their flight and tail feathers, only the new feathers will get color. Second year and older birds will molt all of the feathers including flight and tail, therefore all of the feathers will be colored.

Carotene (C40-H56) unsaturated hydrocarbon is converted by the body into vitamin "A". Vitamin "A" is essential to growth and increases the resistance of the body to infection. Perhaps this is why my red factor canaries that have been fed carotene-canthaxanthin during the molt will remain healthy and reproduce better during the next breeding season. ■



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