

The Borders

by Dave Guinn

During the past show season, it was my good fortune to evaluate several borders as they were placed before me on the show bench. It is a task I relish. To behold and examine closely this lively canary when it approaches the standard is a breath-taking experience. However, high quality borders that come near to the standard are not achieved easily. Conversely, once quality is obtained in one's borders, it is not easily maintained. Constant diligence and ruthless culling is a must even in the best studs of borders. No matter how good one's birds may be, there always lurks the genetic tendency to move to the average or revert to the common type. While I am not suggesting that birds of quality will revert overnight, I am suggesting that faults creep in and become widespread all too quickly. Unless we are constantly vigilant we lose ground more quickly with our birds than we can progress in building up positive values.

A case in point — and the primary reason I have taken pen in hand — is poor wing placement and carriage. The standard says concerning wings: "Compact and carried close to the body, just meeting at the tips, at a little lower than the root of the tail." For these characteristics a total of ten points is given. In past show seasons, few borders were shown that had wings crossing at the tips, carrying one wing higher than the other, or wings that were positioned below the tail. However, during the fall of 1979, probably thirty-five to forty percent of the borders I saw (at widely spaced geographic show sites) would have to be penalized severely for poor wing placement. Another fifteen to twenty percent had the kind of wing carriage and placement the standard calls for and the rest fell somewhere between these two extremes.

DILIGENCE! It is lacking in many border breeding programs when it comes to wings. Diligence can be defined as "persevering application." Persevering ap-

plication of the border standard is exactly what is needed to correct this problem. Even a novice can readily discern this part of the standard, so it is difficult to understand why one sees so many borders with the above-mentioned faults. Perhaps too many of us are compromising in our pairing in the breeding room. Ruthlessness is a must. Never — NEVER — pair two birds, both possessing poor wing carriage and placement. You only fix the fault. If all of your birds have this trait, then sell them for pets and buy better. Now before the cries are heard, "But my birds have such good heads," and "After all, only ten points are allotted in the standard for wings," etc., let me say poor wings lead to a multitude of other troubles. If the wings are drooped below the tail, the top line is totally ruined and you lose the symmetry of a "gentle rise over the shoulders" — now we are talking about another fifteen points in the standard. In addition, the position of a border is affected by its wing carriage (another fifteen points in the standard) as is general carriage or movement (also an additional fifteen points). The same can be said of birds that carry one wing higher than the other or both wings held up from the body and not meeting at the tips. So, one can readily see wing placement and carriage are of greater importance than one might first think looking only at the ten points allotted for wings.

In summary, allow me to say that it is the total standard to which we must breed and judge. One must not look only for condition, head qualities, carriage, wings, tail, size, or any single unit, but rather the complete picture — the idea border. Be diligent and ruthless in eliminating faults as they creep in, and creep in they will. It is worth all of the effort it takes when that special breath-taking specimen is bred. Perhaps too — just perhaps — we can have that real sense of accomplishment that comes when we pass on to our fellow hobbyist borders that we know have been maintained and improved with diligence.

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