

Cockatiel chick (Nymphicus hollandicus) normal 18 days old.

Cockatiels

FANCIFUL CRESTS AND COLORS

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*Article and Photos Courtesy of
San Diego Zoo.*

Cockatiels for many generations have been favorites with bird lovers. They are gentle and docile and may be kept with doves, finches and other small birds. Usually a male makes a better pet than a female because he will learn to talk a little and has the tendency to become extremely attached to his owner.

Cockatiels are found throughout most of inland Australia in suitable habitats. They rarely visit coastal districts and are considered to be accidental to Tasmania. They prefer open country which has belts of scrub and is threaded by water courses. There they may be found in the trees growing along the water's edge. The name cockatiel originates from the Portuguese word, cacatello meaning little cockatoo. A native Australian name for this bird is quarrion.

These handsome birds are nomadic — they are the gypsies in the family of parrots — and their wanderings are governed by their food supply which consists mainly of the seeds of various grasses and plants. They will frequently perch in dead trees when flushed from the ground or when landing after a flight. Also, they have the odd habit of perching along a branch as often as across it.

These birds have a soft, quite pleasant, chattering note with which they call to each other while flying or feeding. They nest in holes in both dead and living trees, often in the hollow spout of a broken dead branch. Sometimes a number of these birds will be found in the same trees as the Rose-breasted Cockatoos, or Gallahs, Kakatoo roseicapilla.

Four to seven white eggs are laid con-

secutively during the breeding season which extends from August to December in Australia. For breeding, we recommend housing these exquisite birds in large flight aviaries — in pairs or in colonies — as they are strong fliers and appreciate the opportunity to exercise their wings. Although some birds will breed in their first year, the best results are obtained from mature plumaged birds, two years old.

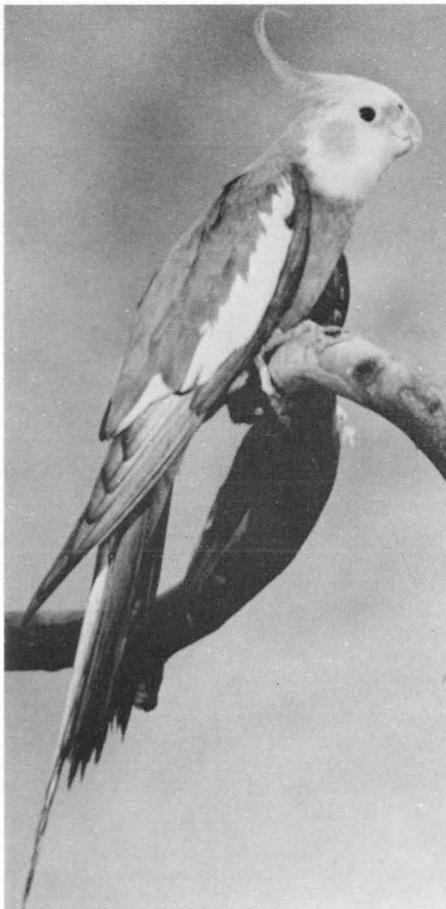
The basic seed diet should consist of a mixture of canary seed, millet, hulled oats, and sunflower seed. The green food could be in the form of carrot tops, silver beet, dandelion, New Zealand spinach, chard and chickweed. Individuals differ in their liking for fruits. We feed pieces of apple daily which is beneficial and nourishing. Millet sprays are always relished. Pound cake and bread crusts soaked in milk are valuable during the breeding season. Cuttlefish bone should be available at all times as a source of calcium and other trace minerals.

Hollow logs or wooden boxes (16 inches by 24 inches and 18 inches high) work splendidly as nests when hung from the top of the aviary or fastened to a back wall. The entrance hole may measure 4 x 4 inches. Six inches of sawdust or wood shavings usually are used in the boxes to cushion the eggs during the incubation period of 18 to 19 days.

Long familiar as a cage and aviary species, the Cockatiel, *Nymphicus hollandicus*, breeds freely in captivity.

One of the most beautiful members of the family is the Lutino Cockatiel, a

continued on next page



Normal Male Cockatiel



Normal Female

recent mutation developed by selective breeding. The Lutino Cockatiel, also sometimes referred to as the White or Albino, Cockatiel, first appeared in North America in 1958 in private aviaries. This attractive color variant is fast becoming the most popular pet of the parrot family, except for the budgerigar or grass parakeet.

Before describing this color phase of the normal cockatiel, the way the mutation acts should be explained. Parrots usually have two basic pigments, yellow and black, which in combination create various colors. Unless modified by the microscopic structure of the feathers, the black pigment produces dull yellows through browns, dark browns to black; and the yellow pigments produce yellow, through orange-yellows to red. Cockatiels differ from other parrots in lacking feather structure which modifies black pigments to produce blue coloration, and yellow pigments to give green.

When a bird, for some reason, lacks the ability to produce the black pigments but can form the yellow pigments, its feathers will be yellow, orange, red or white, depending upon the other pigments in the feathers. Such a bird is called a "lutino" rather than an "albino" because some pigments remain. (A true albino lacks all pigments and is white

with pink eyes.)

The type of inheritance found in the lutino character is called "sex-linked." This means that the characteristic is carried within the germ cells on the sex chromosomes (the internal cellular structures which are responsible not only for carrying hereditary materials, but also for determining the sex of the offspring). If the lutino character is in the cells of a female cockatiel, it results in a lutino female. In males, the character may be masked — so normal-appearing males may have no lutino factor, or may have this hereditary factor present but hidden. All lutino males are pure for the character.

In breeding these birds, if a lutino male is paired with a lutino female, all of the offspring will be lutino (A). If a lutino male is paired with a normal female, all the female chicks will be lutino and all the male chicks will appear normal but will carry the lutino factor (B). These males are called "splits".

When a split cock is mated with a lutino hen, one-half the male chicks are lutino and one-half splits; and one-half the female chicks are lutino and one-half normal (C). In appearance, the chicks of both sexes are one-half normal and one-half lutino.

A split cock mated to a normal hen results in one-half the female chicks

being lutino and one-half normal (D). The male offspring all appear normal although one-half are splits for lutino.

If a lutino hen is paired with a normal cock, all offspring appear normal, although all the male chicks are splits (E).

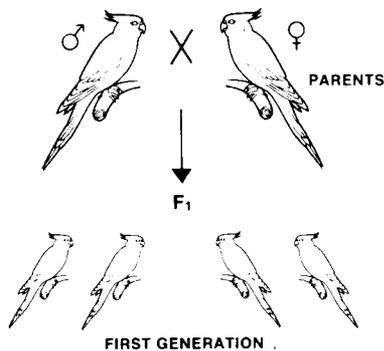
Lutino Cockatiels are reminiscent of white cockatoos, but they show the characteristic orange-colored ear patch of the normal cockatiel. The ear-patch is identical in both sexes and the body has a wash of yellow throughout. Some Lutino Cockatiels are almost snow white and others are pale primrose yellow. Yellowness also is under genetic control and may be intensified with selective breeding. Lutino Cockatiels, because they have lost the black pigment, may be confusing to sex. Adult males differ from females in that the tail feathers and flight feathers show no yellow barring in the plumage. If a hen or a young bird is held in the hand in natural light, it will be seen that these feathers are repeatedly marked with yellow. Except for behavior, these are the only distinctions between the sexes.

Hopefully readers are not too confused in following the breeding pattern of Lutino Cockatiels. When such beautiful birds are produced by specialized aviculturists, they should be appreciated. We enjoy working with the cockatiels of Australia and wish to stimulate further interest among our readers by sharing our experiences and introducing these birds to you.

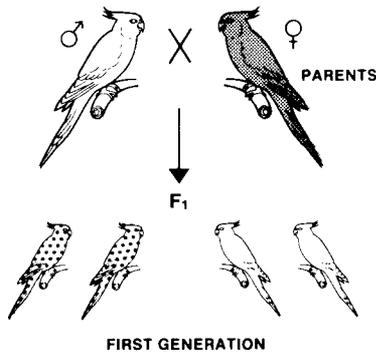


Lutino

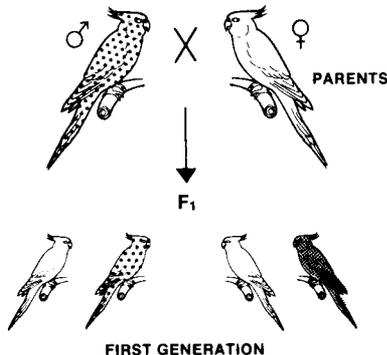
A



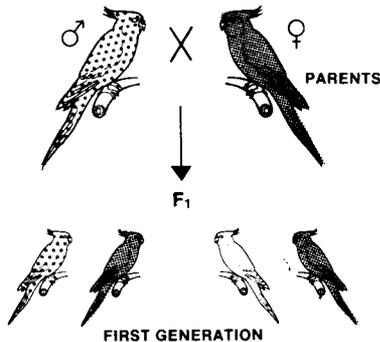
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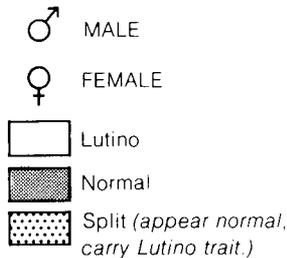
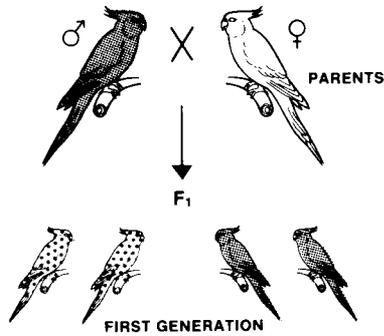
C



D



E



CEREAL FORMULA

for chicks removed from the nest for
hand-rearing

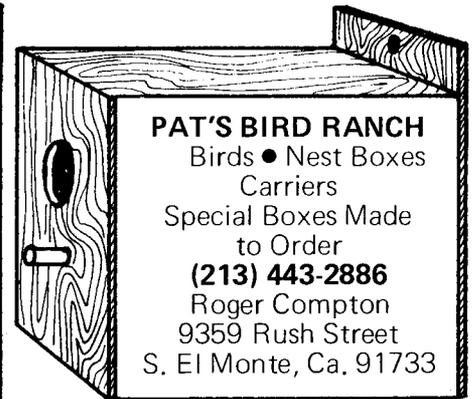
Measurements by volume, not weight.
Use standard measuring cup and teaspoon.

- 1/2 Sperry Wheat Hearts
- 2 fresh egg yolks stirred in
- 1/8 teaspoon table salt
- 1 teaspoon Karo corn syrup
- 1/2 teaspoon cuttlefish bonemeal, fine

Mix thoroughly. Milk or water is added to make a soup-like mixture. Boil over low heat for three to five minutes, stirring gently. Cool until finger warm. Add one to two drops Vitamin ABDEC, an aqueous vitamin solution supplement. Feed with a spoon.

Wheat Hearts — a wheat cereal with wheat germ manufactured by General Mills, Inc., Lodi, California. Ingredients: selected portions of the wheat berry, toasted wheatgerm, iron, niacin, thiamine, and riboflavin. Crude protein, not less than 14.2%. Crude fat, not less than 3%. Crude fiber, not more than 5.4%. NFE, not less than 70.7%. Ash, not more than 1.4%.

ABDEC Drops — aqueous vitamin solution; Parke, Davis & Co., Detroit, Michigan. 0.6cc (approximately 15 drops) represents: Vitamin A (1.5mg) 5,000 units, Vitamin D (10 mcg) 400 units, Vitamin B₁ 1 mg., Vitamin B₂ 1.2 mg., Vitamin B₆ 1 mg., Pantothenic Acid (as the sodium salt) 5 mg., Nicotinamide 10 mg., Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid) 50 mg.



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