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Dedicated to conservation of bird wildlife through encouragement of captive breeding programs, scientific research, and education of the general public.

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American Cockatiel Society American Budgerigar Society

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Northwest Exotic Bird Society

Washington Budgerigar Society

WEST VIRGINIA

Tri-State Cage Bird Fanciers

WISCONSIN

Wisconsin Cage Bird Club

Questions and Answers

*Edited and Researched
by Richard Tkachuck, Ph.D.
Perris, California*

Before we get into this issue's mail, a bit of house cleaning is necessary. Leland Hayes writes in connection with a question several issues ago concerning watering baby quail. He says commercial waterers are available and that an additional danger exists with young quail. If they happen to get wet and chill, death is sure to be near. As an additional note he has asked me to remind the readers that there is a Quail Breeders' Society which works with quail, partridge, grouse, francolin, tinamou and related birds. For more information write him at P.O. Box 389, Redmond, Ore. 97756

Another comment. A couple of letters below illustrates an increasingly difficult problem that is developing concerning the column. The questioner writes about a specific situation but unfortunately does not give enough detail to help us towards an answer. If we are to be of any real aid, you, the questioner, must include enough detail so that we can intelligently work for you. Helpful information will include the feed given, the size of the flight, the symptoms, the position of the flight with respect to heat or other weather conditions. Actually, anything that describes your situation.

Question: *I have a male redrump that has been a very attentive pet, so much so that he regurgitates food for me. After a year or so we got a young female so he could better spend his attention. She is two years old now and he still regurgitates food for me and bites and chases her away. Is there any hope that these two will get together and form a pair? Is there anything I can do to encourage them. G.B., Arkansas.*

Answer: It does appear that your problem is one of fixation to the wrong female and will probably not diminish unless you let some one else care for the bird. In addition, elimination of affection, visual contact and familiar voices will probably be necessary. Even then, there is little chance that he can make the switch. I would suggest that you get another male for your hen and keep what is obviously a very fine bird as a pet.

Question: *What is the average life expectancy of some of the more common cage birds?*

Answer: Help! This is much too general a question. Write again if I do not give you information on the bird you have interest in. Parakeets: 5-8 years. Cockatiels: somewhere about 12 although I have recently heard of one going over 30. Lovebirds: between 5 and 10 years. Large hookbills: 50 to 70 years.

Question: *About ten years ago I started breeding zebra finches, parakeets and love birds. After several years of success, the birds stopped breeding. I still get eggs but no babies. ((Ed. Note. The questioner then described an adequate food and housing situation.) D.P.K., Ohio.*

Answer: In this letter it was not mentioned if the original birds are still being expected to breed after 10 years or if second or third generation birds are being used as breeders. If the first is the case, then it is a problem of old age. If the second is the case, then other problems are to be looked for. Not noted are the following: Are the eggs fertile? If so, at what age do they appear to die? Are you really sure that you have any males in the flights? Are there any vermin that may be scaring the birds off the nest? Another problem might be sterility. Perhaps the introduction of new blood might also increase your success. Write again and include a bit more information. Let us have another shot at it.

Question: *I have a baby cockatiel (5 months) and the tail feathers continually fall out 4 or 5 days after sprouting. What's wrong?*

Answer: Are there any other birds in the flight that could be plucking the little one? What type of food do you give it? Our consultant vet (Hannis Stoddard) suggested that it might be a vitamin problem or perhaps a genetic situation. The limited description was not enough. If the latter, then there is not much that can be done. In my own experience, I have had a similar situation, except that the wing feathers did not come in. As the feathers passed through the skin, they would turn black and dry up. Finally after about a year, the situation cleared and the wings became fully feathered. I do not attribute this to mites or other pests as this problem occurred in two different generations from the same parents.

Question: *All fluorescent lights, including full spectrum lights, suffer greatly reduced intensity as the distance from the light increases and after about 6 months of use at 14-16 hours a day. What bearing does this have in aviculture where artificial lighting is the primary light source?*

Answer: You are very right to note that the intensity of light drastically diminished as one moves away from the source. Assume that we have a light source shining on

a piece of paper with a surface area of one square foot surface. Also assume that there are one hundred units of light hitting that square foot. (Apologies to you physics people.) If we move the piece of paper two feet away from the light source, only 25 units of light will now be hitting the paper. If we move the paper 4 feet away, the amount of light hitting the paper is only 6.25 units of light. In other words, keep the light as close as you can. Now to your second question. We can't answer the question of how much the intensity of the light diminishes with time nor can we tell you how the various frequencies of light that are being emitted change with the lifetime of the tube. But that information is known and can be obtained from the manufacturer of the light. Write them at their product information address and I'm sure you will get it from them.

Finally, what bearing does this have on raising birds? Unfortunately, I know of no controlled experiments that have measured the effect of different types of bulbs of bird health and production, nor do I know of any comparison of bulbs with different wavelength characteristics on the above. If any of the readers can help, let me know. ●

Avian Research Awards

The Avian Research Committee of the American Federation of Aviculture is proud to announce that funds are available for research grants in 1984. Areas of primary interest include avian nutrition, infectious diseases, disease control techniques, diagnostic procedures, incubation and artificial insemination techniques, field studies and general avicultural techniques.

All proposals will be reviewed by committee members and consultants knowledgeable in each field. All proposals must be scientifically sound and feasible. Preference will be given to members of AFA.

The deadline for receiving applications is May 1, 1984. Grants will be awarded at the AFA National Convention in Orlando, August 1 thru 5, 1984. All grant recipients will make brief quarterly reports to the research committee. Results will be reported in the AFA "Watchbird."

A brief letter of intent should be submitted with a request for application forms to Susan L. Clubb, DVM, 5122 SW 128 Pl., Miami, FL 33175.

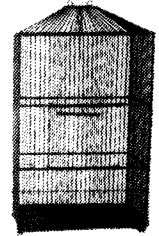
Any donation large or small will be appreciated and will go directly into the research fund. Send your donations to: AFA Special Research Fund, P.O. Box 1568, Redondo Beach, CA 90279. ●

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