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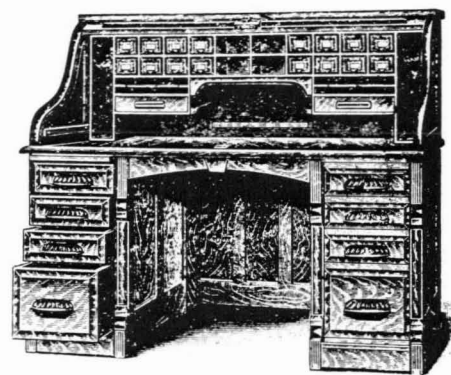
NOTICE

All correspondence intended for the editor of the Watchbird should be mailed directly to his address.

Sheldon Dingle
P.O. Box 340
Norco, CA 91760

From The Editor's Desk

by Sheldon Dingle



Dear Reader:

If you are not a member of the A.F.A., please join. If you are a member, please support the organization every way you can. The A.F.A. is the *only* support group we aviculturists have to monitor the laws that affect us and to provide research that makes our hobby more enjoyable.

If I ever doubted the strength and importance of this wonderful group, those doubts have vanished. I sincerely hope others don't have to go through what I'm going through now to realize the *need* for the A.F.A.

On May 12 I purchased an adorable blue front parrot from a reputable dealer who had bought it the week before from someone else.

About June 1st I heard that the original owner of the blue front had his birds depopulated because of V.V.N.D. I reported this to my vet who reported it to the proper authorities.

On June 2nd a U.S.D.A. veterinarian came to swab our small collection of about 150 finches plus three treasured pets — Tatoo, a six year old male cockatiel, Kracker, a two year old Mexican red-headed parrot which I had spoon fed, and Andy, a baby Indian ring-necked parakeet I am presently hand feeding.

On June 12 I received a phone call from the U.S.D.A. saying the blue front parrot's test was positive for V.V.N.D. and they'd have to depopulate the next day.

I just fell apart emotionally and started calling A.F.A. people. I had to have help to save my birds. The support I received was wonderful and I'll never forget it. (Thanks Lee, Gary, and George.)

These people called everyone they knew and pleaded for our three pets at least. We tried everything possible to save them but the U.S.D.A. said no.

On June 13 the U.S.D.A. called, and to

my surprise, said the tests were not conclusive and my birds would not be depopulated that afternoon. He warned against getting my hopes up though since there was a 95% chance that the final tests *would* be positive for V.V.N.D.

Right now, June 20, we still don't know what's going to happen to our sweet little feathered friends, but we do know that we've got the greatest organization in the world behind us.

Thanks for being there!

Sincerely,
Martha Coleman, Childersburg, Alabama

P.S. June 21

Oh God, I can't believe what's happened. They've killed all of our precious birds, even Tatoo, Kracker, and Andy. They were so healthy.

We're *very* angry. The U.S.D.A. came into our home and dumped everything from two rooms into our back yard.

A murderer has more rights than we do. The A.F.A. is our only hope!



To Whom it May Concern,

I just wanted to write you a quick note with some comments on my first issue of *The Watchbird*, June/July 1984. I am a practicing veterinarian with an interest in avian medicine, and I found both the articles written "medically" and those from the nutrition/husbandry point of view to be quite helpful to me! I am especially hungry for practical information on breeding and raising our feathered friends, because I am more capable of handling the care of a sick



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bird than I may be in raising birds in a productive aviary.

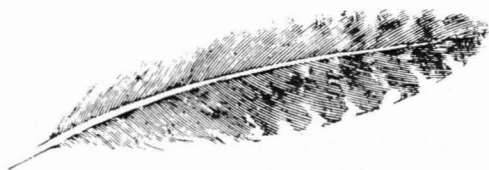
I found it surprising that in Mr. Black's article, "Problems with Finches," he could express so many interesting ideas and theories of nutrition and reproduction and yet at times offer questionable advice on medical areas. Specifically, I am concerned with the "harmful bacteria" cause of the "going light" syndrome that he discusses. I agree that the "logical treatment" of this kind of enteritis would be to eliminate the offending bacteria, but I might add a few comments for all of us to consider concerning bacterial enteritis:

1. Preventative medicine is the ideal medicine: rid yourself of the problem before it becomes one. Since you have not done bacterial cultures or any other tests on the sick birds, are we sure that all are dying of the same cause, not to mention the same bacteria? Where do these harmful bacteria come from? Are there carrier birds that are not sick and yet can infect other birds? Can the food be the source of infection (insects, worms, etc.)? If a bad bacteria is present, is it necessarily the cause of the disease or does it see an open door in an already sick bird? (We call these bacteria "opportunists").

2. Whether you treat the above bird with a good, all-purpose antibiotic (we call these "broad spectrum") or with your chlorine bleach, remember that we will also be killing normal or beneficial bacteria. We hope to decrease the numbers of the "overgrowing" bacteria to a level where the normal body systems and bacteria can take over. Let us not sterilize the gastrointestinal tract of the bird like we sterilize drinking water that is impure. There are newer antibiotics that are available (amikacin, carbenicillin, cefotaxime, etc.) that may be more selective in killing off the bad (gram negative) bacteria.

To one and all, thank you once again for your work on this publication. I look forward to the next issue.

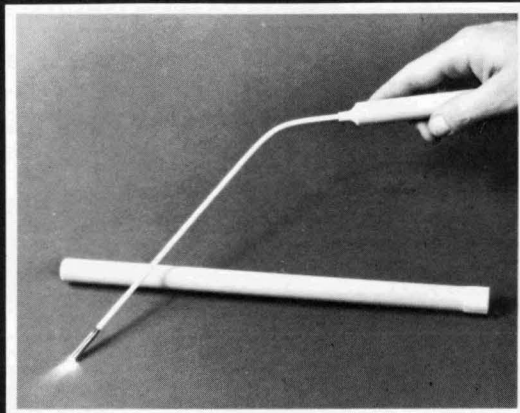
Sincerely,
Gary J. Brake, D.V.M.



Dear Editor:

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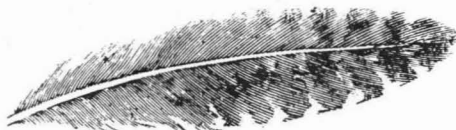
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Sincerely,
David Golub
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Dear Editor:

I recently purchased a bronze pionus from a pet shop, and within a week the bird died. I had an autopsy performed, and with the results (death due to anemia and severe hepatitis) I confronted the pet shop owner. The owner referred me to a sign in the window, "All birds sold as is." The autopsy report clearly proved that the bird had been ill for quite some time. I believe that pet shop owners should protect themselves from people that abuse birds, or any other animals, but does this give them the right to sell birds that are sick?

This was a very heart breaking, not to mention expensive, lesson for me. I have come up with a simple way around dishonest pet shop owners that I would like to share with you and your readers. Do not buy a bird from someone that will not consent to a blood test and let you have the results. It will be worth the cost. Don't go on faith alone; get it in writing (and then check that out).

Sincerely,
Peggy Carson
Renton, Washington



Dear Sir:

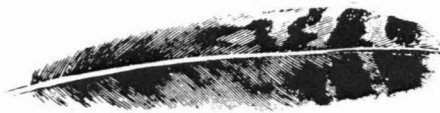
How come by city law a person can have 60 homing pigeons but only 24 exotic birds? Is there anything we can do about it?

Name and city withheld

Zoning regulations in each city, county and state differ. The key to survival in this world is to do whatever you please, keep the birds you want, just don't disturb your neighbor. Most zoning laws are designed to protect the majority from bothersome situations

caused by one or a few individuals. Few, if any, local governments have the resources to send someone out snooping and counting birds. The bird keeper almost never has a hassle unless a disgruntled neighbor turns him in.

You can, of course, paint your parrots grey and call them pigeons.
Ed.



Dear Sheldon,

I thank you for publishing the article "A Few Notes On Hardiness In Winter," Oct/Nov 1984. Prior to that article I was under the naive misconception that I should strive to provide the best possible environment for my birds. I was totally unaware that as an aviculturist I should attempt to discover how much pain and suffering my birds can endure. I now understand the tremendous need to discover the absolute minimums required to keep captive birds alive. Having been enlightened, I eagerly await future articles describing the kinds of abuse and neglect our birds can tolerate. Perhaps an article describing how to split parrots' tongues to make them talk would be useful. May I suggest an article titled "A Bread and Water Diet is Good Enough"? I have also wondered how long a canary could survive in a cement mixer.

Wait a minute! Maybe I'm being unfair. Maybe I misunderstood the article. Perhaps this was preliminary research to learn if tropical birds can be taught to hibernate. Think of it! We wouldn't have to be bothered with the inconvenience of caring for them during the unproductive winter months. Think of the money we could save by not having to feed them, not to mention the savings in labor. Perhaps we could keep unmated birds on ice until a partner could be found. Birds could be packed in small coolers for shipment or transport to shows. The possibilities are truly exciting.

That's got to be it. I just didn't understand the article. Allowing birds to freeze their toes isn't inhumane, it's educational. It pointed out a fact that most kids learn by sticking their tongues on frozen parking meters or ice cube trays. Keep your birds dry and off frozen metal.

Regarding hibernating birds, I still have one question for you. Can I just stack my birds in the refrigerator until needed or would you suggest that I keep

them in the vegetable crisper drawer?
Sincerely,
Davis A. Koffron

My dear Davis, you do author Buckingham an injustice. He has the misfortune to live in a harsh climate and love birds at the same time. If you re-read the article carefully you'll find Buckingham a caring, observant aviculturist doing well in spite of cruel weather. Indeed, the sub zero temperatures cost him only two birds. I dare say many of us have done worse in the balmy breezes of the sunny southland.

But on to your questions. Give the canary about one minute if the machine is running and about ten years if it isn't. For the hibernating birds you use the refrigerator, of course. The crisper is for gerbils.
Ed.



Dear Friend,

For our later years we are looking forward to a pleasurable hobby and business of raising and selling birds. We receive so-called wholesale bird catalogs and price lists from all over the U.S. Not one catalog or bird keeper that we know can come close to the prices at the local store. It always has at least two employees, there is the rent, phone, lights, insurance, newspaper ads, etc. to pay for — the overhead has to be high. Yet there is very little hard stock on hand so the profit has to be made on the birds. Is there a secret place to purchase birds for almost nothing?
Name withheld by request

For the price of some bolt cutters and a gunny sack you can get all the birds you want nearly any night of the week. It happens all the time.

But before accusing said store of illicit traffic in birds, please consider some other possibilities. It could be a bookie joint. Or perhaps they sell dope in the back room. Do customers bring merchandise out in little plastic baggies? Are most of the customers men? You may have a bawdy house on your block. There is the remote possibility that the place is a legitimate bird store run by some really dumb people. One can't always buy high and sell higher.

I don't believe in secret bargain places. This very store may be the closest you'll come to it. If its prices beat even the wholesalers and breeders, perhaps you should buy there and sell elsewhere.

Ed. ●

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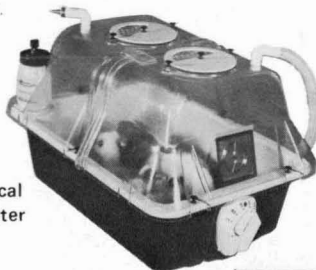
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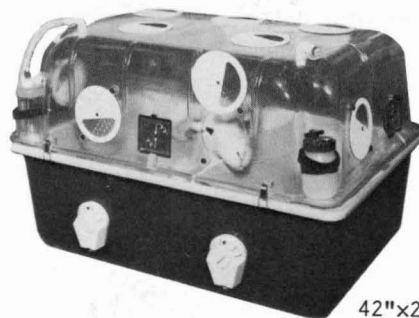
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