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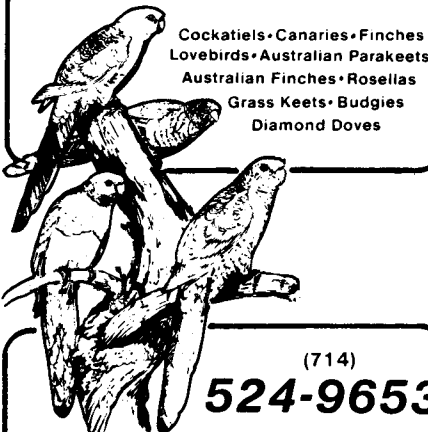


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AFA Making News

by
 Tom C. Marshall
 Great Falls, Virginia

Diet Study For Pet Parakeets Funded

The American Federation of Aviculture awarded \$2500 to Dr. Donald Polin, Avian Nutritionist with the Department of Animal Science at Michigan State University, to do nutrition research with exotic birds, specifically the pet parakeet or budgerigar.

Dr. Polin indicates that nutritional studies for pet and aviary birds have received very little attention to date. "Life spans of many exotic birds in captivity are too frequently cut short due to nutritional deficiencies, a major concern for zoo keepers, conservationists and pet bird owners," he reports.

Dr. Polin further explains, "Companion birds are known to have a high incidence of nutritional diseases because of improper feeding. The first studies will explore requirements of protein, calcium and phosphorus in budgerigars (parakeets) during their life cycle. There are only two Universities in the country that are now doing nutritional studies with exotic birds, MSU and the Dept. of Avian Sciences of University of California."

Research For Preservation Of Bird Semen Funded

The American Federation of Aviculture is funding the research efforts of Tim Hargrove, a Florida Atlantic University graduate student determined to develop procedures for preserving viable bird semen to be used in captive breeding of endangered avian (bird) species.

In trying to build up endangered populations of birds it would be ideal if all the birds were sexually mature, compatible and evenly divided between males and females, but that is seldom the case.

Artificial insemination and the ability to preserve semen for long periods of time should improve the odds with any serious captive breeding program.

Mr. Hargrove explains, "I am collecting semen from male budgerigars (parakeets), diluting it, freezing it at minus 196°C, thawing it out, and artificially inseminating the females."

"I am even attempting to freeze-dry the semen," he reports.

Study Of Bird Droppings Funded

The American Federation of Aviculture awarded \$2500 to Dr. Arden Bercovitz of the San Diego Zoo for a project which promises to identify the males from the females in hatchling chicks of one of the world's most endangered species, the Puerto Rican amazon parrot.

Fewer than three dozen of these birds remain alive today on Puerto Rico; all are under the watch of field biologists from the U.S. Department of Interior as part of a captive breeding program.

Waste materials, i.e., bird droppings collected from the shell fragments at hatching, can be measured for the presence of excretory hormones (estrogens). Chicks can potentially be sexed because females are expected to produce and excrete larger amounts of estrogens than males.

"Let's face it," Dr. Bercovitz explains, "knowing the sex of the bird is vital if we are to pair them appropriately and breed them. Two males or two females will not produce babies. Success of this project increases its potential application to other species."

"It is exciting to be working with these unique birds and very satisfying to assist in efforts that can optimize their reproduction." ●

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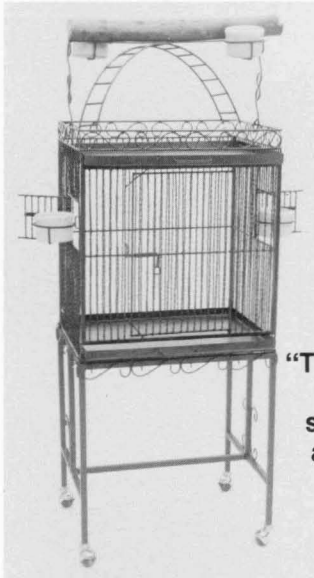
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