

# Are You Afraid of "Color Bred" Canaries?

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For decades the concepts of color breeding have baffled the newcomers to the hobby of breeding canaries. Color breeding is one of the most intriguing and challenging facets of canary breeding. It is probably no harder to breed show quality color-bred canaries than it is to breed show quality type birds.

First, it demands a general knowledge of canary breeding and maintenance.

Second, it demands an understanding of some of the simpler genetic inheritance theories. Neither should scare anyone away from breeding color-bred canaries. The general care and breeding habits for the color-bred are so similar to those of the other canaries that information can be found elsewhere under the topic "general care."

When breeding for color, one would remember that color-bred canaries have the same feather structure as the type canaries — hard and soft-feathers. Therefore, the practice of breeding a hard-feathered bird to a soft-feathered bird is basic. The color-bred canaries are present in both the lipochrome (clear) or melanin (dark) varieties.

The lipochrome birds consist of those birds that are completely void of melanin pigments. These birds display only the basic ground colors of yellow, white, or red-orange. The yellow ground is similar to the ground color of the original wild canary. The white ground is the result of a spontaneous mutation. And the red-orange ground is through hybridization. It is a man-made or induced color.

The white grounds are of two distinct types, referred to as dominant white or recessive white. The dominant white gene is dominant to both yellow and red-orange. It is a homozygous dominant lethal factor, or to say it simply, if a dominant white is paired to another dominant white, 25% of the young will probably die. A dominant white should be paired to either a yellow or red-orange ground bird. The dominant white shows signs of the other ground color gene by the presence of small amounts of yellow or orange in the primary or outer flight feathers and in the tail feathers.

Since the recessive white is not very abundant in most areas, the novice need not fear purchasing one or more by accident. Genetically, the recessive white gene must be present in both parents (either self white or carriers) for a white offspring to appear. These birds are pure white and are genetically recessive to both the yellow and the red-orange ground color. Recessive whites are delicate birds since they have difficulties producing Vitamin A, therefore, they should be reserved for the more knowledgeable color breeders.

The red-orange ground canary is the most unique quirk of nature. These birds are the result of the hybridization of the canary (*Serinus Canarius*) and the Black-headed Red siskin (*Spinus Cucutlatus*), which is an inhabitant of Venezuela. It was a one-in-a-million chance that such a hybridization would produce fertile young, but now it is a common occurrence. Through many long years of hard work, our predecessors have given us the crimson-like beauties of today.

There is only one mutation that affects these three ground colors. It is called "ivory". The effect is that it masks or reduces the ground color to approximately one half its normal intensity. It reduces the red-orange almost to pink and the yellow to a very pale and delicate yellow, but it has little or no visual effect on the white ground colors.

The main message here is directed to the novice breeder of color-bred canaries. So, let these glimpses of the color breeding fancy stimulate in you a desire to participate and to learn. You should not be afraid of those areas of canary breeding in which you have not been involved. Nor should you let the need of acquiring a knowledge of genetics prevent you from enjoying one of the most intriguing aspects of the fancy. Purchase a pair or two from a competent breeder of color-bred canaries and begin a breeding program of your own. Your knowledge of their genetics will increase much faster as you work and see the results of your pairings. Try it! Color breeding is fun! ■

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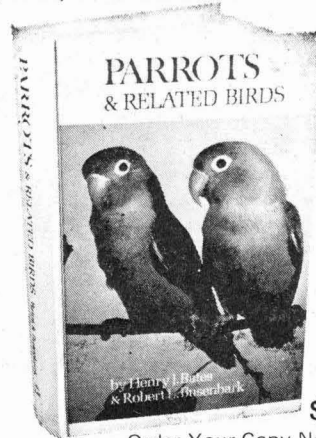
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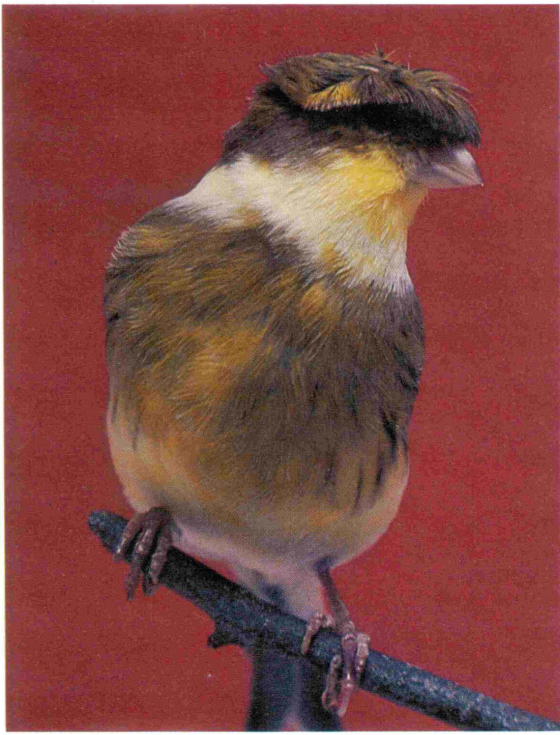
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*Varigated Gloster Corona,*  
owner/breeder Janice Pritchard

*Red Factors, Frost (left) and Hard Feather (right),*  
owner/breeder Janice Pritchard



photos by Steve Clause



*Opals, White Ground (Silver) and Yellow Ground,*  
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*Cinnamon Dilute and Fawn Pastel,*  
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