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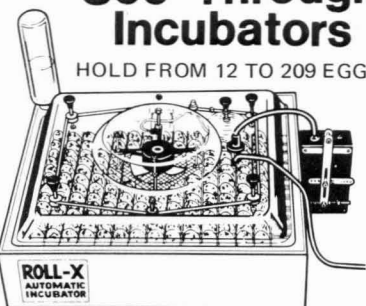
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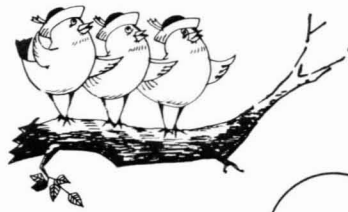


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Charlotte Nierenberg

# Canary Calendar

by Charlotte Nierenberg  
P.O. Box 2095  
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## ASCERTAINING THE HEN'S READINESS SETTING UP HENS OUTFITTING THE BREEDING CAGE REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT OF EGGS ADDITIONAL HINTS AT HATCHING TIME

It is most fortunate that most canaries "hear the call" after the busy holiday season! The novice must necessarily resign himself to the fact that vacations, weekend holidays and prolonged visits must wait until after the breeding season. There are baby sitters, dog sitters and sometimes bird sitters, but these people are rarely knowledgeable enough or willing to serve small dishes of egg food three times a day, remove and replace eggs and perform the many duties necessary to service many hen canaries in various phases of canary breeding!

### ASCERTAINING THE HEN'S READINESS

A hen canary, close to one year of age or older, will show signs of breeding condition in the following ways:

By flying pertly back and forth, answering the song of the cocks.

By tearing strips of paper or flying with a loose feather in her beak.

By busily inspecting a "trial nest" and trying it for size.

By developing a round, full abdomen making her vent area appear flat as compared to the cock's vent which shows a definite protrusion.

### SETTING UP HENS

This is the term used by breeders to place the hen in her breeding cage as close to the time of readiness as possible.

A common mistake of the novice is to "rush the hen" and place the couple together long before they are ready. Unnecessary squabbling ensues, the nest and cage get soiled, the cock wears himself out chasing his mate and many times the males becomes so attached to the one hen that he will not service others.

Whether the beginner will breed on a "pair-to-pair" basis, or use one male for a few hens, a workable procedure to follow before breeding commences is to allow his hens to fly together in a medium to large flight, awaiting signs of readiness. The cocks may be placed in the individual breeding cages until their hens are ready to join them. As each hen comes into condition, she may join her mate, wire divider in place. When the cock starts to feed the hen through the divider, and she accepts, the courting phase has started and the divider may be removed.

### OUTFITTING THE BREEDING CAGE

When the pair continues to get on well together, the nest should be placed in line with a perch, close to a door opening for easy access to the nest when necessary. Remember that the birds need headroom to feed their chicks — the nest attached about midway between the top and bottom of the cage.

No "frills" are required in the breeding cage. Two perches on either side are all that are necessary in most cages. Swings are taboo and perches should be securely anchored to insure fertilization. The center floor of the cage may be used for extra small dishes of nestling/condition food, egg food, etc. and since the

perches are on either side of the cage, the food will remain free from droppings.

A nest liner can be purchased commercially and is made from a very thick piece of felt, cut strategically to fit snugly inside a nest. Although not an absolute necessity in a wire nest, it is almost a "must" in a plastic one since any nesting material will slip and slide around without it. The liner can be anchored down in both types of nests by using white, non-toxic glue on the underside of the liner and holding it firmly down inside the nest until it sets. If the hen is not a good nest builder, the liner will compensate for her inadequacy. It also makes a more shallow nest possible, enabling the babies to void easily over the top when the hen stops cleaning the nest.

A good, safe nesting material is burlap material, cut into about 2½-3" squares and stripped down. This will not "fuzz up" or mat causing the birds' nails to become entangled. (A hen's nails should be clipped before breeding commences if they are too long.)

#### REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT OF EGGS

There are, as usual, two schools of thought on this subject. If the breeder works and leaves very early in the morning, he cannot take the time to remove and replace each egg every morning. (The eggs are usually laid one each day from about 7:30 a.m. to 9.)

If, however, the breeder can do so, I believe there are many advantages to the "removal system".

1. On the day the real eggs are returned to the nest, the breeder may add 14 days and accurately estimate the exact day of hatching.

2. All the chicks will hatch at approximately the same time, giving each an equal chance of survival. (If the eggs are not removed, the first chick will hatch five days earlier than the fifth chick in a clutch of five eggs! This is a great disadvantage to the runt who may be trampled by his older nestmates.)

3. If the eggs do not hatch in 15 or 16 days, it is a reasonable certainty that they will not hatch at all. With the "leave 'em alone method" the 16 days must be figured from the day the last egg was laid and a much longer time must pass before the eggs can be discarded.

4. If the hen lays only two eggs, they can still be returned on the fourth or fifth morning, leaving two dummy eggs in the nest. A hen will more securely incubate on four instead of only two. If two chicks hatch, the dummy eggs may be left in the nest assuring more breathing space if the hen broods too closely.

#### How to Remove and Replace the Eggs

"Dummy eggs" should be prepared in advance. They may be purchased from suppliers in bird magazines and are very inexpensive. They can also be made by using a non-toxic play-dough that is sold for children. Marbles or pebbles should be avoided since they are too hard and if the hen expels her fragile egg against them, it may be damaged.

After the birds have mated, prepare a small box lined with seed or uncooked cereal. Each morning, after the egg has been laid, remove it with a deep teaspoon, replacing it with an artificial egg for three or four mornings. The last egg is usually a definite blue color. All the eggs may be replaced on the fourth or fifth morning, removing the dummy eggs at the same time. (The real eggs may remain in the cereal box without concern — they may be turned once or twice a day gently after the fourth day.)

#### ADDITIONAL HINTS AT HATCHING TIME

1. During the 14 days of incubation, serve the hen only basic food — seed, gravel and water. (No greens or rich foods.)

2. On the 12th day of incubation, offer the hen a bath or sprinkle the eggs with a little tepid water. Do so on the 13th morning also.

3. On the eve of hatching, place a dish of nestling/condition food in the cage. In the morning, place a teaspoonful of soft egg food in a small container (plastic lined covers of baby food jars make perfect egg dishes). Egg food should be offered three times a day, in larger proportions as the babies grow.

4. Although the cock may remain with the hen if he behaves himself, she will not allow him to feed the chicks until they are at least four days old. I find it more advisable to place him on the other side of the divider or in a cage nearby while she is incubating and until the chicks are four days old. Without him, she must leave the nest for food and is more likely to feed her babies upon return. He may be returned to his family after that period.

5. If breeding early in the season, extend your lighting period after hatching. My lights go out automatically (I use a timer) at 8:45 p.m. and go on at 5:45 a.m. The chicks will have a much better chance at survival if fed after eight hours instead of waiting twelve hours for natural lighting. Be sure there is a night light on at all times in the bird room during the dark hours.

**GOOD LUCK!**



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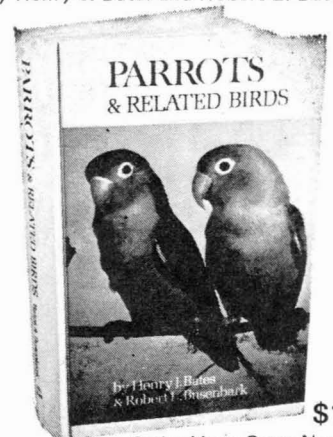
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