

Raising Canaries for Show and Pleasure

— tips for the novice —

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Preparing Canaries for Show

Catch all birds you anticipate showing eight to ten weeks ahead of the show. Pull broken wing and tail feathers so they will grow back completely before the show. Check for missing toes; these birds are still good for breeding but not for show. Trim their beaks and toenails. Rub a small amount of oil (olive, mineral, etc.) into their legs taking care not to get oil on the feathers. Place each bird in an individual cage and study them for undesirable characteristics: crooked beak, crossed wings, fan tailed, etc. Study body type for desirable characteristics. Make a final selection of which birds to show including a couple of spares and keep them in individual cages. This will prevent gloster coronas from being picked and lizard rowings from fading and feathers being pulled out by other birds. Keep cages clean, offering baths as often as possible. Spray each bird several times each week with whatever mixture you use in the mornings. Three are listed for your use:

1. Two tablespoons of Listerine to one quart of water.
2. One tablespoon Listerine plus two teaspoons glycerin to one quart of water.
3. One teaspoon each of Epsom Salts, Listerine, malt vinegar, and glycerin to one quart of boiling water. Use this spray while somewhat hot.

Get birds used to having hands around the cages and their cage picked up and moved. Train the bird to hop back and forth between perches by using a pointer stick. (I go up and down my cages every day throughout the year talking and using my hands, to try and keep them as tame as possible.)

Do not take birds to a show that appear to be listless, nervous, molting, have loose droppings, missing toes/nails, lumps or sores, broken feathers, crossed wings, or are mis-shaped. Use the proper show cage for the type of

bird. Make sure the cage is clean and provides an attractive setting that shows off the good points of the bird.

One week prior to the show, inspect the bird to make sure it is clean and trim beaks and toes as needed. If you give it a bath, put it in a warm place to dry. Maintain the cage with clean bedding (newspapers, shavings, rice hulls, etc.) at all times so final cleaning will be minimal.

Color food for red factor canaries should be provided when the hens are set up to ensure even feather color throughout. Feed until the end of their molt which is normally about two weeks before showtime. Do not give red factors a daily bath; spray them a few times a week instead.

Brush and comb feathers with an eyebrow brush. Brush and train coronas using a small amount of moisture to get the feathers to lay properly.

Equipment for Showing

Make sure each cage is painted with proper colors. The cage should be very clean; wash it if necessary. Perches and drinkers should be cleaned. Bring some spares in case of soilage or breakage. Use clean roller mix seed on the cage floor. Bring black electrician's tape, brush, cotton swabs, scissors, Qwick Stop (for bleeding), and Kleenex. On the morning of the show, check their vents for soilage. Clean as needed with Kleenex. Birds may get nervous going to a show which may cause loose droppings.

Preparing Birds for Breeding

Factors that induce breeding are lighting, temperature, diet, mating calls, nesting material, and a nesting place. Birds will come into breeding condition as a result of increased daylight time. Gradually increase the lighting to 12 or 13 hours per day for best fertility. The amount of light triggers the release of hormones by the pituitary gland and the onset of egg laying. Increase lighting about 15 minutes per

week.

Give the birds a good, clean seed mixture daily. Keep cuttle bone in front of them at all times. Give them an egg mixture two to three times per week starting six weeks before pairing. Provide plenty of clean water.

Feed a variety of greens daily. The better greens are kale, collards, dandelion, romaine, chick weed, broccoli, zucchini, mustard, and endive. Give the birds sweet apples, oranges, or grapes twice a week. During their molt give them cucumber two or three times a week. They also like sweet potatoes (cooked), bell peppers and watermelon. Do not feed them parsley, avocado or head lettuce.

Sprouted seed is an excellent food for both parents and babies. Use straight rape or a mixture. I use a mixture of rape, safflower, buckwheat, canary, millet, hemp, milo, wheat, niger, and alfalfa. To sprout, soak 24 hours in plenty of water. Use a small amount of Clorox or calcium propionate to reduce the fungal growth. Rinse well and put in a strainer, cloth bag, old panty hose, etc. for 24 to 36 additional hours rinsing two or three more times. Do a final rinse and drain for an hour. Place in plastic bags and refrigerate. This will keep for five or six days.

Keep drinkers clean and filled daily with fresh water. Cut layers of newspapers to fit the bottom of the cages. Remove the top layer daily. Dust the shelves and floor of the birdroom with a pesticide once a month.

Nesting Food

There are several good nesting foods commercially available: Ce'De, Abba, M&M, Petamine, etc. Look for food that has around 22% protein.

I use a mixture made with four boxes Jiffy cornbread mix, six eggs, and one can of carrot juice baked in a 9" x 12" greased pan. Crumble the cornbread and add four cups dry nesting food (Petamine, M&M, or the dry mix that follows).

- 1 cup quick oatmeal
- 1 cup Gerber's mixed baby cereal
- 1 cup dry, heavy bread crumbs (wheat, etc.)
- 1/2 cup Gerber's high protein baby cereal
- 1/4 cup wheat germ
- 2 packets Knox gelatin
- 1/4 cup non-fat powdered milk with vitamin D3

The mixture below can be made in advance and kept in the freezer:

4 cups of one of the dry nesting foods (above) blended well with 2 large scoops of Avicultur-1 billion
 1 teaspoon ground egg shell
 1/2 teaspoon Minmeal
 1 tablespoon poppy seed
 1 tablespoon sesame seed
 1/2 tablespoon alfalfa seed
 1 teaspoon kelp
 1 teaspoon Brewer's yeast
 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
 6 hardboiled eggs, finely chopped
 Scraped cuttlebone

Mix the above ingredients with the pan of crumbled cornbread and blend well. Mix until light and fluffy by adding distilled water. Divide mixture into portions sufficient for daily feedings and package in plastic bags and freeze. Defrost overnight in the refrigerator. Add sprouted seed, toss and serve fresh the first thing in the morning, at noon, and at 4:00 p.m. Remove containers before lights are out and change papers. Dispose of any old food in the cage.

Feed this egg mixture two or three times a week in preparation for breeding season. Give fresh greens twice a day to young babies.

Wean babies as soon as possible. Sprinkle oatmeal on the bottom of the cage to get them used to eating on their own. You can keep a separate mix of the dry mix for the babies to feed.

Breeding

Start with a clean breeding area, clean cages, dividers between cages, and clean, healthy birds. Don't use birds with pinched eyes, or that appear droopy or listless. Start with healthy, alert birds only. Pair off the bird using basic rules: hard feather to soft feather, crest to non-crest, white to yellow. Never breed two birds with the same fault. Two hard feathers will produce brittle feathers. Two buffs increase the length of the feather, loses the feather, and the bird appears larger.

Treat your birds before breeding (six weeks before laying) to rid them of all bad bacteria that may affect the babies. Use one teaspoon Pyradan (Vetisulid) to one gallon of water for ten days or use OC Mycine according to package directions as an alternate.

Powder shelves and the birds for parasites. Prepare each bird for breeding by trimming their nails and beak and trim or pluck around the vent. Leave the guide feather on the male.

Nests are available in plastic, wire, or wicker. Plastic nests are easier to keep clean and sanitary. The nests should be

lined with felt, nursing pads, coffee filters, Kleenex, etc. I use nursing pads held in place with two-sided tape with mite powder under one layer. If the hen is ready to set, they won't pull out the nest liner. Don't set them up before they are ready to lay. Keep the hens in a flight cage until their abdomens are full and round and the vent is horizontal. Hens with more exercise and good diet won't become egg bound. One male may be paired off to several hens. Novices should pair off one male to one hen.

Use shredded burlap, Kleenex, or toilet paper as nesting material. Lint from the dryer is too dusty.

Sources for Bird Supplies

Jeffers Veterinarian Supply, William V. Reichert, 1523 Potter Road, Park Ridge, Illinois 60068, phone (312) 825-2473. Phone 1-800-641-2836 for catalog.

ABBA, P.O. Box 122, Elizabeth, NJ 07207, Phone (201) 353-0669.

Red Bird Products, 2786 Fruitridge Road, P.O. Box 20004, Sacramento, CA 95820

Best Canary Magazines

Canary and Finch Journal, P.O. Box 1583, Lake Oswego, OR 97035

American Cage Bird Magazine, One Glamore Court, Smithtown, New York 11787

Best Book for Beginners

Canary Breeding: Tips and Tricks by Herman Osman — available from Red Bird Products, \$8 plus \$1.50 handling.

Magic Potions

(Use your own incantations for a successful season)

Mite Control: Seven Dust 5%, Malathion 4%, Pyrethrin Dust or Spray, Shell Pest Strips, Carbaryl Dust 5%

Cleaners

Clorox, Nolvasan, 1-Stroke Environ

Medications

Pyradan (Vertisulid) 54 grams (1 teaspoon to a gallon of water). Use for ten days starting a month before the start of the breeding season.

O.C. Mycine — follow directions on the label, use four to six weeks before setting up for the breeding season.

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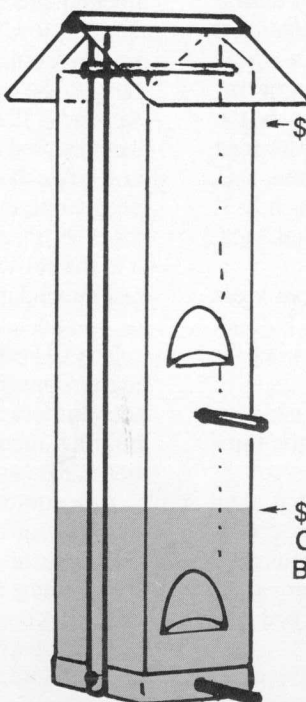
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