

Cute Songstros Glosters

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Attractive, diminutive, easy to breed and easy to care for, Gloster canaries are one of the most in-demand type of canaries today.

Lacking the in-depth history of many canary varieties, the Gloster canary is a fairly new phenomenon, first appearing on the British show bench in the 1920's. In a crossing of rollers, crested and borders, Mrs. Rogerson is credited for starting the Gloster fancy further popularized by active show enthusiasts of the time. Mrs. Rogerson hailed from Gloucestershire County, hence the name Gloster for the type.

Glosters come in two compatible types; the corona or crested bird and the consort without a crest. Either male or female can have the crest — but a crest must be bred to a non-crest — a corona to a consort.

Breeding crest to crest can cause not only undesirable visual damage but may cause damage to the cranial bone structure and produce a lethal gene combination where chicks will die in the shell or shortly after hatching.

The ideal Gloster should have a short, cobby body approximately four to four and a half inches in length. The tail should not be exceedingly long and if crested, the crest should radiate in a uniform fashion from a good center and the feathers should come down to, but not block, the eyes, leaving them discernible. A show bird should sit balanced on the perch with no swaying or hunching of the back.

Unlike some of the larger canary breeds, Glosters are fairly easy to breed. As previously mentioned, one bird will have a crest, the other should not and it doesn't matter who has the crest.

Care should be given in matching pairs. If a hard-feathered bird (one with tight feathering) is used, a soft-feathered (more loose feathering) mate should be chosen.

Glosters lay three to five eggs and it is best to remove eggs so they won't

start developing until the last egg is laid (often a different shade of blue). If all the eggs start incubation together there is less of a risk of losing a baby that is younger and smaller and cannot stretch as far as its older siblings for food from the parents.

An open nest of wicker or an open box can be used. Grasses, cotton string and washed burlap make good nesting material. When the hen is ready, and only when she is ready, she will spend a day, maybe two, building and preparing her nest, testing it often by sitting in it and making proper adjustments.

Eggs hatch in 13 to 15 days and most hens will remain quite tight to the nest for the first week. Baby Glosters should be banded at six or seven to eight days when pin feathers are evident on the wings — any earlier and the bands may fall off or the hen may remove them; any later and the babies' feet will have grown too large to get the bands on.

It's fun to watch the babies develop, which can be done easily in the open-nest environment. The male will help with the feeding and sometimes sit on the nest when the hen leaves for a break.

Gloster babies fledge at approximately 21 days. A second nesting site with fresh material should be offered or the hen may decide her offspring's feathers may line her new nest very well.

Once fledged, the young with their father can be separated from the hen. The male can be removed once a day for a short period of time and placed back with the hen to fertilize her new clutch of eggs, but should be back with the chicks to spend approximately the next two weeks weaning them.

Hard boiled eggs or commercial egg food and spray millet work well as weaning tools. The babies will fly down and beg from their father at the food dish and soon learn where the

food actually comes from.

A seed diet needs to be supplemented with green, leafy vegetables and whole grain bread as well as other fruit and vegetable treats the canaries will take. Egg food can be offered as an enticement to begin nesting, but should be limited while the hen is incubating her eggs. Once babies hatch, fresh egg food a couple times a day will encourage feeding.

Grit should be offered to canaries as well as ground, dried egg shells, cuttlebone and/or commercial calcium powder. Canary hens, especially, require a lot of calcium for egg production. A lack of calcium can result in soft shelled eggs or the inability to lay eggs altogether. This can be fatal to the hen.

Many young male Glosters will try to warble a little song at eight or 10 weeks of age. However, they won't develop their full song until after their first molt at four to six months of age.

Most bird fanciers and breeders are sold on the pleasure brought by a canary's song. Glosters, with their cute Beatle-like haircut appearances, have looks to match their songs. ●

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