



# Canary Calendar

by Charlotte Nierenberg



Charlotte Nierenberg

(Mrs. Nierenberg is the author of "So You Want To Breed Your Canary" and countless articles on canary care and breeding. She will gladly answer questions through this column, and by mail. For a personal reply, please

enclose a stamped addressed envelope to P.O. Box 2095, Sepulveda, Calif. 91343.)

## CANARY BREEDING IN AUGUST? FORGET IT!

Indeed, this may not be an apropos time of the year to start a series of canary breeding articles. As a general rule, breeding operations should draw to a close in June, and by July, sexes should be separated.

In our vast country and, in fact, within a radius of a few miles within a state like California, climatic conditions can vary greatly. Breeders themselves add a multitude of variables — some breed outdoors, colony style in unheated aviaries, while others cage-breed indoors with controlled temperatures. Despite this confusion, however, most birds realize by instinct, that when hot weather approaches, they must moult or die!

Many times, a breeder is tempted to allow an unproductive pair to try once more in July — or permit a third clutch. The hen may indeed lay fertile eggs and raise her chicks to a certain point. However, although moulting is a normal process, birds are at a low ebb during this period and just do not have the stamina required to raise their young to maturity.

In retrospect, at this time of the year, one may wonder why little or no fertile eggs were produced. Don't always blame your hen! The cock may have been in poor condition and coition never was accomplished. Shaky perches or swings have no place in the breeding cage. Pre-conditioning with proper nutrients is very

important.

Methods and systems vary greatly and a novice has the right to become confused by the completely contrary advice offered by many successful breeders. Unfortunately, the only school available to the beginner is one of "experience, trial and many errors." I urge the novice to sort out the various tidbits of information, use what makes sense to him, and try to follow the pattern of a breeder whose facilities and conditions are similar to his own. Experiment with new foods and ideas during the months of August through January so that the birds will be accustomed to their fare during the breeding season.

By this month, the last clutch of babies should be out of nest and weaned — at approximately four weeks of age. Until they are six weeks old, they cannot digest seed and should be offered the nestling/condition food they were raised on. Egg food or biscuits should be given three times a day, gradually cut down to once a day by the sixth week. Other staples in the weaning cage are the usual gravel, cuttlebone and fresh water daily.

At this age, it is a good idea to note the young cocks that are "throating" a song and place them in a separate flight. It is much easier to spot a young singer among the quiet hens later on.

From six to eight weeks, hard seed and a small amount of fresh greens can be added to the daily diet. The baby moult starts at approximately eight to ten weeks of age and disturbance should be kept to a minimum.

By sixteen weeks of age, a youngster can be considered adult enough to be sold or kept for the next breeding season.

I will endeavor to keep my calendar suggestions general enough to be applicable to all. Whether a breeder specializes in "type" canaries, rollers for song, or experiments with new color tones, his canaries react the same way to good care, food and sanitary conditions.

Many of my ideas are by no means original and have evolved from the correspondence and personal contact of countless delightful "canary people" from all areas of our country. I rarely, if ever, recommend a food or method that I have

not tried and liked personally.

Let's make this "our" canary column. Questions and suggestions from novices and experienced breeders will be most welcome. It has been a long time since I encountered an "oldtimer" who wanted to jealously guard his secrets.

Join a bird club — become involved. Most of us realize the gratification of "bird talk" with others sharing our interest. Help aviculture to grow by helping a novice. ■

## AGAPORNIS ACRES—continued from page 13

Great strides have been made with the genus of Agapornis but much more remains to be done. Closed banding and individual identification of birds is necessary, as well as, reliable records if we are to establish and improve our birds, as well as our vital new mutations. Many Love Birds breed so freely in our aviaries that we must control the number of young the pair is allowed to raise. I have had very experienced Aviculturists tell me "they rest themselves" meaning the nest boxes are never removed. This is not good aviculture and a practice that should not be encouraged. Two nests a year is adequate, possibly a third if the clutches of young were small in number. When colony breeding, it is very difficult to stop the breeding cycle of all the pairs at the same time. There are always a few late starters and they are still incubating eggs when the majority of the pairs have fledged their second clutch. In this case I usually allow a third clutch and then foster the young to birds in other aviaries. Love birds on the whole are good parents but you must know your birds.

If you have never fostered any young before, I offer a few guidelines that will help. Always choose for a foster hen one that is "broody", this means a hen that is steady on the nest, one that is not too nervous when you inspect her young. Pick a nest in which the young are approximately the same age as the young bird you are fostering. Do not over burden a hen, four or five young is adequate for a Love Bird. Sometimes if necessary, a good foster hen can do well with six or seven, but this should only be done as a last resort. The point is that a hen should not be expected to raise more than ten young in a period of twelve months, if you intend to keep her in good condition for future years. I have hens that were banded in 1966 that are still raising good nest of young. I feel that you must control production or you will eventually produce weak young birds and encourage other problems such as feather picking of the young by the parents before they fledge, young that get stuck in the moult (feather