



The Show Budgie

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For Show Budgie Breeders and Exhibitors

The Feather Plucking Bird by Dr Tony Gestier

There is nothing the birdkeeper despair of more than the bird that feather plucks. For years bird owners have cringed in embarrassment whenever anyone saw they had a chronic feather plucking bird. Every remedy was tried, very few were successful. To help these birds we must be a little logical and a lot patient. The first step in helping the feather plucker is to decide if it is a feather plucker. Not all birds with scraggy feathers are pluckers - many birds suffer diseases which will cause their feathers to fall out or look ragged. Viral diseases, such as PBF and Polyoma virus, bacterial skin diseases, chlamydiosis and a host of internal diseases can cause feather problems. External factors such as mites and lice, cockroaches and cage design also cause feathering disruptions. When deciding if the bird is a true feather plucker look closely at the bird - ask yourself:

- what species is affected?
- what is the pattern of feather loss?
- are there feather shafts still in the skin?
- how long are feathers that are damaged?
- are other birds affected if so how?
- what is the diet of the bird, how long has it been on this diet?
- is the bird well in other aspects - eating, activity, behavior, droppings etc?
- is the skin affected or just the feathers ?

Careful observation is necessary to be accurate - often a good close look will give you the answer.

Some bird species are much more prone to true feather plucking than others - the Gang Gang is an example. These birds are notorious pluckers, careful examination will show they destroy feathers about 1 to 2 cm from the skin. Their pattern of plucking is usually - flight - tail - chest, so they end up as a flightless, downy bird with no resemblance to the most charming of the cockatoos.

Feather loss over the head indicates an outside factor, usually the mate, is involved. Young bird in the nest with feathers missing from their backs and head are being plucked by their mother - generally she wants them to leave the nest so she can lay again.

Careful examination of feathers and skin will show lice or mite if they are present. Holding a feather up to the light will show feather lice very clearly - there can be massive numbers present in some birds. Budgies can have large numbers at the base of the tail feathers, so many that they look like mud stuck to the feathers. Treatment for all mite, lice and insects in the birds environment and on the bird is the new all purpose insecticide from Vetafarm - Avian Insect Liquidator (A.I.L.).

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Editors Views...

Who controls who? Who works for who? Who gains what? Whats in it for me? Now that I have your attention and you are wondering what I am ranting about, let me say BSSA. I hope your response was aaaahhh. If you have any comments contact me at telephone (012) 542 3533 or forward them to me at email NelJA@Telkom.co.za.

We are well into the breeding season and things are going well for most breeders. The only comment I am getting is that the quality of the rings are a concern. The colouring of the number is coming off which makes it very difficult to read. One good thing is that the BSSA have however been in contact with the supplier. Hopefully this is rectified soon.



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Budgerigar Health

~Terms by Sam Vaughn ~

Viruses

These are a type of germ which lives and breeds inside the cells of animals. They are capable of living outside the animal but will not multiply in this situation.

Bacteria

These are much bigger than viruses and usually live between the cells of the infected animal and multiply both within the animal and outside. They can usually be killed by antibiotics.

Congenital Disease

This is a disease which the bird has from the time it hatches, although occasionally the symptoms may not show for months or even years. Such diseases may or may not be inherited.

Inherited Disease

This is a disease which is passed from parent to offspring via the animal's genes. Depending on the mode of the inheritance the parents may, or may not show evidence of the disease.

Vertical Transmission of a Disease

This is transmission of a disease from parent to offspring by contact or via the egg. Such diseases are not inherited although they may appear so.

Horizontal Transmission of a Disease

This is transmission of a disease to other in-contact birds but excludes parent to offspring transmission.

Follicle

A small pocket-like depression of the skin from which the feather grows and by which it is attached to the bird before a moult.

Barb

The branches coming from the feather shaft and forming the bulk of the feathers.

Barbules

These branch off from the barbs and have small hooks on them (barbicels) which lock together the barbs and thus the feather.

The Feather Plucking Bird, continued

Ail contains a water based insecticide that is harmless to birds but deadly to insects. The long activity time of AIL means that adult insects, nymphs and eggs are all killed. The residual activity of this new insecticide will leave your birds insect free for many weeks. A.I.L.'s safety allows you to spray the birds themselves, cages, perches and anything else in their environment in the one operation. Being water based, AIL will not sting the birds eyes allowing birds to be sprayed all over while in their cage.

Once you are happy that the bird is insect free, the next step in sorting out a plucker is to look at the diet. Lack of Vitamin A is a common cause of feather plucking, especially in Eclectus. These birds have a high Vitamin A requirement which is often not met by birdkeepers. The use of regular injections of Vetfarm ADEC (a safe injectable form of vitamins A, D, E and C) is the only way to control the problem. Other species of bird may suffer the same problem, especially those that evolved in forest regions, so the use of ADEC is recommended in most cases of feather plucking. One clue to the status of the birds Vitamin A level is to look at the soles of the feet - birds with smooth, shiny, pink looking feet are often Vitamin A deficient. Ensure that the diet being fed is adequate (most are not!). The addition to seed diets of Soluvet, a water soluble, high potency vitamin supplement will help balance the diet against a lack of essential vitamins by providing the recommended daily dose. However some birds will still require additional Vitamin A - this is when ADEC is invaluable.

The most difficult area to sort out are those birds who are Psychologic Feather Pickers. Once we are happy that insects, diet, outside factors and disease are not involved we arrive at the diagnosis of a wacky bird! The classic case here are the young galahs that have been hand reared. These birds miss out on the normal socialisation that occurs in the creches (the groupings of young Galahs in trees after they have left the nest). Some of these birds become disturbed at 9 - 12 months of age. They go from loving docile pets to this feather plucking, screaming, neurologic mess. Their temperament changes dramatically along with their appearance - these birds need to see an avian veterinarian who may decide to prescribe tranquillisers to stop the bird self mutilating.

It is primarily the hand reared birds and the cockatoos which are prone to Psychologic Feather Picking. Birds in the aviary, if they have tatty feathers, usually have a more physical problem. We see feathering problems related to disease - some diseases cause chemicals to be deposited in the skin that make the skin itchy. These birds will then begin to pluck or chew at their feathers until they cause major feather damage. Diseases such as Chlamydiosis (Psittacosis) and lung infections are known to show as skin/feather problems. For Chlamydiosis, the treatment of choice is Psittavet (pronounced "sit-a-vet") from Vetfarm. Available as a powder for in water flock treatments or as an injection, this drug offers the best, most effective way of treating Chlamydiosis. Most Australian birds are thought to have some degree of Chlamydiosis so regular treatments of the aviary are a way of preventing future disease. For more details on the problems associated with Chlamydiosis and the best ways to treat the disease contact your avian veterinarian or Vetfarm.

Should your bird become a ragged, scruffy looking individual, don't despair, start looking carefully at what he is eating and what he is doing but seek expert help if the simple treatments don't solve the dilemma.

Cinnamons by B. Byles

There was a time when Cinnamons were fine-feathered birds, shunned by all but a few top breeders because they did not wish to see the size of their Normals dragged down by them. Times have changed. Since those early days, the make-up of this variety seems to have changed markedly and many of the best Cinnamons are now as good, if not better, than their Normal counterparts, winning major best in show awards. Because of these changes, the advice which might have been given, say 50 years ago, no longer applies. These days, the best Cinnamons can be, and are, mated to the top Normals with excellent results. If there is a drawback to breeding Cinnamons, it is the fact that, because it is a sex-linked variety, once it is included in a stud, the variety can (if allowed to do so) take on a prominence which some breeders abhor. The answer is, of course, be strict when selecting the birds to be retained each year and keep only the very best. But the same advice can be given for all colours so the problem, as far as Cinnamons are concerned, is not easy to solve and, probably the best thing to do is change direction and build up the family of Cinnamons, rather than try to be too selective as a result of a whim. Good Cinnamons can, of course, be used with Normals and Opaline Cinnamons and give breeders added choice, knowing that any youngsters produced from such matings can prove their worth in both in the breeding pen and on the show bench. If there is a drawback to having Cinnamons in a stud, it complicates the situation when Normal/Cinnamons are mated to other Dilutes. In fact, the cinnamon factor should not be allowed to mix with Greywings, and many Clearwing studs have been wrecked when Normals have been paired to Whitewings and Yellow-wings, in an effort to improve size and head qualities - not realizing that the Normals concerned were split Cinnamon. If there is a problem when attempting to breed top-quality Cinnamons it is that of maintaining good body colour and getting the wings just right. All too often breeders tend to concentrate on overall size, type, mask and size of spots, neglecting to give due consideration to colour and markings. Poorly-coloured Cinnamons - whether too light or too dark - should be discarded, bearing in mind that the standard stipulates that body colour of Cinnamons should be 50% that of Normals. Cinnamons displaying opalescent markings on the side of the head should also be penalized and or discarded.

Soft Eggs

The failure of a hen to surround the egg with a hard shell has been ascribed to two causes. Either the bird did not receive a sufficient amount of lime or calcium or she is suffering from tumours or malformation of the glands which secrete the material for the egg shell. The egg may be surrounded by a skin only and may be laid in this condition. Such an egg is often dropped on the cage floor instead of in the nest, because the hen has no control over holding an egg without a shell. Soft shell eggs frequently cause eggbinding, the muscles not being able to grasp the egg in order to expel it. If heat treatment does not help, the egg must be punctured carefully. Some eggs are surrounded by a very thin shell which soon breaks during incubation. Prevention consists of feeding birds plenty of grit rich in calcium and an abundant amount of greens all year round. Constitutional or anatomical defects causing soft shell eggs are incurable.

Tip of the Month

~Selling Birds by Jim Hutton~

Never let your young birds go until they are through the moult.

We are sometimes tempted to dispose of a young bird because we think it is not good enough. This applies to all fanciers, not just Beginners. It is surprising how some birds tend to be late developers and do not show their full potential until after their moult. You often find that it is a family that has this trait, so until you gain much more experience, do not be too hasty in disposing of could be your future winner.

NEL BROTHERS STUD

XN2

EST. 1996

Most colours bred

1998

Best Beginner - Berario
Best Beginner - Area 5
Best Novice - NTBS Club Show
Yellow Face CC's x 2
NTBS Club Champions

1999

Best Novice Any Age - Berario
Yellow Face CC x 1
Dark & Olive Green CC x 1
JSBS Derby winners
JSBS Club Champions
Yellow Face Grey Champion Bird

2000

Best Opp. Sex on Show - JSBS
Millennium Show
Best Novice - JSBS Millennium
Show

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Visitors welcome. Please call first

Scott-Scott Aviaries SSA

~Sylvia & Ken~

1997 Best Beginner on Show Durban
1998 Best Beginner Young Bird Area 5
Albino CC
D.B.C Club Champion
B.S.S A Champion Beginner
1999 Cinnamon Green CC
Cobolt CC x 2
Double Factor Spangle CC

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The Jacaranda Show Budgie Society

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JSBS Millennium Show Winners

Birthday wishes go to

Pieter van der Linde - 7 April