



The Show Budgie

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For Show Budgie Breeders and Exhibitors

Breeding Better Budgies by Robert Manvell

There seems to be a fair amount of confusion within the fancy, regarding the breeding of quality Budgerigars, because there is so much contradictory information passed on. Most of the techniques tried by fanciers do not give the results they were expecting. I think this is because the providers of the information are very experienced breeders, who are giving information about their own birds and experiences. This is fine, only they are in possession of better quality birds than most of us. I have no doubt their information is correct, but it is only relevant to their own birds and as such can't be considered a generalisation. Therefore, what is successful for them would have a very different result if they were working with lesser quality or a different line of birds. So what works for them will not necessarily work in our aviaries. Thus we need to formulate our own strategy with which we can work, to breed better quality from whatever birds are in our present possession.

Another important thing we must do when seriously trying to improve our birds, is to be very sceptical regarding the information passed onto the fancy in the way of miracle pairings. I'm sure you are aware of the ones I mean, like flecked headed birds carry the feather you want, or use large dirty opalines to improve spot, put spangle into everything they will only do good and increase fertility at the same time. Some fanciers in Australia have become so paranoid regarding the shape of the wings on a bird, they have become oblivious to the rest of the bird. Some of our most experienced judges are indicating a bird is not a bird unless it has head blow. Forget the rest of the bird, head blow is everything. There are literally hundreds of these fallacies. These are the myths to disregard, always look at the complete bird, don't get sucked into these unqualified fads. To be fair some of the above ideas may have worked but I would suggest in very isolated cases, and remember they are only opinions to explain some inherited phenomena. People who utter these ideas do so without ever proving whether they work or not. If a bird isn't quality itself or isn't from a quality family, then it will not help you, regardless of which magical feature it has or variety it belongs to.

If you analyse all the famous fanciers, the ones who have changed the way we think about and look at Budgerigars. The Alf Ormerods (dec.), the Jo Mannes, the Harry Bryans (dec.), probably the South African, Dr. Robertson and indeed a few others, but a very select few. These are the breeders of, not the buyers of birds. The quality of the birds in their aviaries has not been reliant on the quality of bird they can purchase year in and year out, it's a result of their own ability. These 'breeders' all give the same underlying principle to the fancy when probed on how they breed such superior quality stock. Almost always they will say "you must know your birds". This is fundamental to breeding any form of livestock to excellence, not only Budgies.

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Highlights

The Inter-Club will be held on 27 May 2000 between the JSBS and the NTBS. The club with the exhibitors with the most points will be the 2000 Interclub champions.

Report back next month.

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542 3533

All contributions can be
forwarded to John Nel
P.O Box 43594
Theresa Park x2
0155

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Budgerigar Health

~Mites by Sam Vaughn ~

Feather mites of a variety of species are very common on budgerigars, but are not usually seen by the fancier as they are mostly very small. They are visible only under a microscope. They also tend to live deep in the feathers close to the skin. In the majority of birds they cause no problems at all. Occasionally mites can cause feather disease in a number of different ways. Firstly, in heavy mite infestations these active parasites caused irritation. This in turn led the birds to scratch and bite their plumage, leading to tatty feathers, or feathers which had been bitten off at various positions along the shaft. As mites prefer to live on a bird's rump, the tail feathers are frequently the most affected. Secondly, some species of mite will eat small segments of the growing feathers, so when they are fully formed a small part of the feather is seen to be missing. These are most obvious on the large wing and tail feathers, although the contour feathers can be affected at times. The third way mites can affect the feathers is by invading the follicles, which results in the growth of a distorted feather. Only the follicles of the large feathers of the wing or tail seem big enough for the parasite to enter, and usually only one or two feathers are affected. These are frequently very short or horn-like.

The diagnosis of this condition depends first on finding the mites. However, as these parasites are so common, one has to eliminate the causes of the feather disease before a diagnosis of the mites can be made. Treatment with any of the proprietary anti-mite drugs is effective.

Breeding Better Budgies, continued

The only way to get to know your birds is to work with them. Or in technical terms, progeny test or test mate them. This gives an indication of the capabilities of any particular bird, with regards to passing on features to the next generation. Jim Moffat claims, the first five pairings each year are the easiest to decide on. Why? Because he re-pairs the most successful pairings from the previous season. This is true in my aviary. My birds give their best in the second and third year of breeding. I believe this is because they have shown individually, what they are capable of, and I pair them accordingly.

By 'World standards', I have not produced any what you would consider to be 'Super birds', although my overall quality is not bad, and I have produced a couple of birds with 'Grunt'. Nevertheless, a fair percentage of my birds are definitely an improvement on my original imports and progressing slowly each season. Therefore, from my breeding results over many years, and not with just the recent imports, the only reasonably successful way towards consistently breeding better birds is through progeny testing. This is the strategy to use. Find out the capabilities of your birds by the babies they produce. As I stated earlier it is our job to identify the birds within our aviaries which breed superior youngsters, and use them.

After a few seasons if you are on the right track, you should find your better quality birds are producing your best young. Always try to work with the absolute cream of your birds. Rather than pairing up everything in the aviary and hoping you will fluke a good one. Although, this seems to be a current trend with many breeders adding more and more breeding cages. Some have had success with this technique, and they justify it with the old adages, "you only need to breed one good one", along with "breed a lot to get a few". You can not consider a person who adopts this technique to be a breeder with any competence. Pure Chance breeding or the numbers game. I liken it to playing Roulette at a Casino.

Always, work with the very best birds you have and give them every opportunity to prove to you what they are capable of. Take your time, the babies each year will be the sign posts indicating the way forward. If you are not producing anything worth while, and you decide new blood is the only option, please consider this. Neither pedigree, nor a birds visual quality is a guarantee it will pass on its good qualities (visual or latent) to its progeny. For this reason buying birds should always be regarded as a bit of a lottery. Having said that, both visual quality and pedigree are an advantage, when deciding on which birds to purchase. Personally, I lean towards blood line procurements, they tend to be a little more reliable and generally of far less cost. Therefore, I can afford more blood line relatives from the selected superior family, increasing my chances of success. Only buy out of a good family of birds, regardless of the visual quality offered. The better the blood line you purchase, the more likely you are to see quality in the youngsters. If you wish to purchase top visual quality, and hopefully save many years work, expect to pay handsomely for the privilege.

Remember you are fighting against 4 million years of evolution, thus the birds readiness to revert to its natural wild state. Quality can only be maintained and improved with attention to detail, keen observation and sensible well thought out actions. Finally you must select for and concentrate on FEATHER QUALITY!

Dead in Shell

There are many causes of death of embryos in the egg

There are many different causes of death of embryos in the egg. If embryos of our cage birds were not so small, we could examine them for possible causes. Deformities are often present. Such impairment of growth may be due to deficiencies in the yolk, which nourishes the embryo, or to hereditary factors. Certain beak deformities have been found to be inherited. The embryo may be in the wrong position within the egg. Cooling of eggs is less often the cause than assumed. Normal embryos can stand much cooling before being injured. Milling around of eggs by young of the previous clutch is a common cause for the failure of eggs to hatch. Too much moisture in the air prevents the egg from breathing normally. An atmosphere, which is too dry, will dry out the egg and toughen the membrane within the shell and the hatching chick will not be able to pierce it. The homeland of our budgies, Australia, is a dry continent and it is perhaps not surprising that these birds do not prosper in an atmosphere, which is too humid. If the hen feels the eggs need moistening, she will dampen her breast feathers on wet greens if such are supplied in her cage.

Share your experiences
with us by contributing an
Article

Feel free to contact the editor.

Articles always
required.

John or Ian Nel
(012) 542 3533

Colour for Beginners by Jim Hutton

It is sometimes difficult for the beginner to identify the various colours and varieties that are in the makeup of our budgerigars. In the coming months we shall concentrate on three points,

1. the basic colours
2. the different varieties
3. sex linkage

Blues

Blues also come in three different shades, firstly you get Skyblue, which as the name suggests is roughly the colour of the sky, you get a dark blue commonly called Cobalt, and then you have the third blue, still darker commonly called Mauve. As I mentioned earlier, Blues when paired together cannot produce a Green. However if you pair a Blue and a Green together it is possible to breed Blues and Greens. To do this, the Green must be genetically masking Blue, otherwise the Green being dominant to the Blue, you will only get Greens.

Next month we will look at Grey Greens.

Tip of the Month ~Door Close by Peter Noonan~

To ensure that you don't leave your safety door ajar when you go in and out of your birdroom, it is wise to have a method of automatic closure. This is one I have recently fitted to the birdroom.

Required components:

- * 1 - ordinary washing-line pulley
- * 1 - length of thin rope
- * 1 - 1 litre screw-capped plastic bottle

The washing-line pulley is fixed outside the safety door but at some height greater than one metre above the floor. Make a hole in the centre of the cap of the plastic bottle and thread the rope through it making a knot at the end so that it cannot pull through. Half-fill the bottle with water and screw on the cap. Thread the other end of the rope through the pulley and attach to the inside of the top of the safety door.

As you go through the door you will find that it will automatically close behind you. If you find that it closes too violently then remove some of the water from the bottle.

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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