



The Show Budgie

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The Nel Brothers Stud
(012) 542 3533

For Show Budgie Breeders and Exhibitors

An Experiment with Lighting by Bryan Byles

To breed successfully, budgerigars require housing that provides snug quarters away from draughts and protected from adverse weather conditions. However, there is another factor that needs careful thought when fanciers are erecting or modifying their birdrooms. I refer to the amount of lighting, both natural and artificial, that such an environment gives our birds.

With natural lighting, we should include enough windows so that the sun's rays can reach most areas without being too strong. Birdrooms should provide good levels of light, but not take on the function of a greenhouse in which temperatures fluctuate in the extreme.

When it comes to artificial lighting, it is all too easy to install fluorescent tubes in a birdroom, add a time switch and think no more about it. Of course, if the end product enables you to record good breeding seasons, you can leave well alone. On the other hand, if breeding results are not all they should be, think again - as I have.

I remember reading an article in *Cage Birds* in the 1950s written by the late Cyril Rogers in which he explained how budgerigar fanciers should cut back on the length of time artificial lighting is used during the non-breeding season and gradually extend it to bring the birds into condition as pairing-up draws near. It was sound advice, which I am sure many readers followed. It was common sense. Don't wild birds come into breeding condition each year when the days begin to get longer?

This advice was expanded upon during a visit to Dr Alf Robertson in Durban, who is probably the most successful South African budgerigar breeder of all time. His medical knowledge and the excellent way he put over the subject added another part of the jigsaw. He explained how light affects our birds' glandular system. He described how the pituitary gland, at the base of the brain, is affected by light and how this important part of the body provides our birds with the propensity to breed successfully.

Most bird breeders understand these facts. However, while many do change the length of time their lights are switched on according to the season, some people don't bother. There are those who leave on their lights from early morning to late at night throughout the year and seem to do just as well, despite their unscientific approach.

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Highlights

On the 29th July a Mini Show and meeting was held at the Molkontin Stud. 12 members attended with 2 visitors. The judge was Mike Davies and the winner were:

Best Bird on Show - Molkontin Stud
Best Opposite Sex - Nel Brothers Stud
Best Champion - Molkontin Stud
Best Intermediate - Pieter vd Linde
Best Novice - Nel Brothers Stud
Best Beginner - Neville Greyling

Please remember the National on 11 and 12 August 2000.

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

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Budgerigar Health

~Feather Cysts by Sam Vaughn ~

It had not been anticipated that this condition would be such a common cause of feather abnormalities. The other unexpected feature of this condition was, that in the vast majority of the cases, the cyst or cysts had not been spotted by the fanciers.

Almost all the feather cysts occurred on the outer parts of the wing or the tail, although some were seen on the necks of birds. The cysts were of three types, the first and most common for 70% of the cases, was roughly spherical, up to 1.25cm (just over half an inch) in diameter. Cysts of this type were either very hard or slightly soft, depending on the thickness of the fibrous capsule. This capsule surrounded a core of yellow cheesy material, and the distorted remains of one or more feathers.

The second type was very similar to the first, but the surrounding skin was inflamed and thickened. As most of the lesions had not been noticed by the fanciers it was not possible to establish whether the damage to the skin came before or after the development of the cyst.

The third type was only seen on wings and accounted for fewer than 10% of cases seen. These were multiple and long and narrow in shape, lying side by side with one cyst corresponding to the follicle of one primary feather. They contained cheesy material as in the other cysts but in a proportion, a very short malformed feather was protruding from the tip of the cyst.

There was a very strong correlation between the first two types of cysts and marked buffness. Birds with this type of inherited plumage have a strong tendency to develop cysts. Unfortunately fancier's records were insufficiently detailed to show if cysts themselves are inherited, as is the case with the equivalent condition in canaries (lumps).

Research suggests buff feathering is linked to feather problems. There is no treatment for this condition other than surgical removal and it must be borne in mind that the birds will never regrow the feathers. It is probably not advisable to breed from birds with feather cysts or from their close relatives.

An Experiment with Lighting, continued

However successful we are, most of us feel we should do better - in other words, breed more chicks, especially from the best pairs. This was the subject of discussion I had last year with Fred Eatwell and his son, Kevin, a vet in Swindon, Wiltshire. We went through the usual diversity of topics, such as health, hygiene, good nutrition and so on. However, one subject that came up kept me thinking long after Fred and Kevin had left for home - the intensity of light, not just the length of time artificial light is switched on each day. These fanciers attribute their success, at least in part, to the intensity of the artificial lighting they use in their breeding room.

They use all-wire cages, which are divided into groups with fluorescent tubes running vertically between blocks on the back wall of their breeding room. This means that all their pairs live in a much brighter environment than most. I have to admit that, until Kevin suggested increasing the amount of artificial lighting I use in my breeding room, the thought had not entered my head.

It was only when I came to experiment and added three additional tubes on the ceiling at the front of my birdroom, and then a further two at waist height for the benefit of my bottom row of cages, that the improvement in lighting became obvious.

Breeders have suggested in the past that pairs housed in cages with the minimum of light often do best. Whether or not this is true would be difficult to prove. What I am suggesting though, is that breeders whose results leave something to be desired could, and should, give serious thought to the amount of lighting in their breeding rooms.

I originally had three 5ft fluorescent tubes in mine, but now have eight. The place not only looks better, but the birds also seem more active as a result. Whether I breed more youngsters during the coming season remains to be seen. Hopefully, the experiment should be well worth the effort.

Soiled Eggs

An alert breeder will spot an egg with a live chick inside trying to hatch

natural coating on the shell which prevents germs from entering the egg. At times, however, the caked droppings are so thick that the young bird inside cannot break the shell with its egg-tooth. When the eggs are so heavily coated with droppings that the pores are sealed and bacteria can enter, the young bird may die long before hatching. Gentle washing in lukewarm water may be tried, but it is better to check on care and feeding of the parents to find the cause for the sticky droppings. Nests should be quite dry. An alert breeder who spots an egg with a live chick inside trying to hatch, may often successfully save the birds life by gently breaking the shell if he senses a problem. Some breeders refuse to help the chicks out assuming their must be something wrong with them. We have helped some out at times and found them to grow into healthy birds. Sometimes pulling a little bit of the shell off with tweezers is all that is required and the bird can do the rest.

Colour for Beginners by Jim Hutton

Lutino / Albino

Lutino and Albino are similar to the Green and Blue, except with all red-eyed birds, they are devoid of all colour pigment. They are yellow instead of green, white instead of blue, and of course, they have red eyes instead of black eyes. The difference being in their breeding characteristics. Red-eyed birds are what we call sex-linked, that is the females are always either Lutino or Albino, they are always visual and can never be split for Lutino or Albino, whereas the cocks can be either Lutino or Albino, as well as Green split Lutino, or Blue split Albino. So for example, you can have a Green cock bird split for Lutino, and he is capable of breeding Lutino hens even if paired to a Green hen, but to pair a Lutino hen to a Green cock, you will only breed Greens, the cocks being split Lutinos.

Next month we will look at Varieties

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

Tip of the Month

~Weaning Chicks by Nancy Carr~

Weaning hand-fed chicks Budgies in the wild normally feed on the ground, and the babies learn to take food from the floor more readily than from a food-cup. To help hand-fed babies wean more quickly, put a plate of food on the floor of the cage in addition to providing food in cups. Begin doing this from the time the babies begin to perch and fly. When the babies are down to two formula feedings a day, stop putting food on the floor. The reason for stopping before the babies are fully weaned is to give them time to learn to eat from the cups (otherwise you will have a weaned baby who doesn't know how to eat out of the food cup!)

NEL BROTHERS STUD

XN2

EST. 1996

Most colours bred

1998

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

1999

Best Novice Any Age - Berario
Yellow Face and Dark & Olive
Green CC's
JSBS Derby and Club Champions
Yellow Face Grey Champion Bird

2000

Best Opp. Sex on Show - JSBS
Millennium Show
Best Novice - JSBS Millennium
Show
Best Bird on Show - Inter-Club
Show
Best Novice Any Age on Show -
Gauteng
Violet and Dark & Olive Green CC's

**Telephone John or Ian at
(012) 542 3533**

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
A.O.C/V CC
Best Novice Young Bird Area 5

We welcome fellow enthusiasts, to phone, or visit,
have tea, stay the night, but please come.

**Do give us a call.
(031) 4651004 or 083 358 7125**

The Jacaranda Show Budgie Society

Annual Subscriptions

Membership Fees:

Member - R 120.00
Spouse - 50% of Member
Pensioner - 70% of Member
Juniors - 40% of Member

New membership Entry : - R 100.00 (Once
off)

Visit us on the Internet at
<http://www.geocities.com/petsburgh/5240>

or

**Contact Pieter v/d Linde for more
information at**

Tel : (012) 335 6950

August Birthday Wishes

Gert Pieters on 12 August
Gert Erasmus on 19 August
Kobus Hechter on 31 August