



IN SEARCH OF CANARIES...

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Selection Time

Keeping and breeding canaries presents a seasonal timetable that is different each year but somehow strangely similar. Christmas, or shortly thereafter, is the breeding season. After that comes the molting season and the selecting and training of the young birds. Following this process, the birds must be selected and trained for the shows. Thanksgiving, Christmas and start over!

As I write this, the molting season is expressing itself and a few of the late breeding hens are just finishing their season's work. The usual clean up commences and muttered vows to never do this again. However, a few days of non-breeding activities soon settles the frayed nerves and the selection time for possible show winners changes your whole outlook.

Now the breeding hens are placed in the flight for R & R. The young birds are placed together with one or two prime singing males to start their education on how to properly sing. At this time it is advisable to place a number of single perches throughout the flight so a young bird can be alone to sing without danger of interruption. The song of the canary should flow, not be in little fragments. The fragmented song is neither melodious nor attractive, so allow ample perching for solitary practicing.

The diet at this time should be carefully watched as the adults need proper care to revitalize their system after the arduous work of breeding.

Youngsters and unflighted birds need ample room to fly to develop muscles. The more early flight a bird gets, the greater size he can attain and the muscular body will stand him in good stead against illness. The diet at this time should be carefully monitored to be sure that he is getting proper nourishment and not just eating

"junk food."

Seed fed in individual containers rather than all mixed together can mean a big savings in money as well as feeding time. We all have watched a bird sort through a dish to find the one seed that is his favorite—wasting a lot of seed in the process. Rape, canary, poppy, teazel, linseed, niger and hemp can be fed to good advantage. The amount of each in a dish depends on the amount the birds should have. Canary is the largest amount for a good diet and linseed is probably the least of the seed volume. All play an important part and for a rounded diet. When fed individually, the waste soon slows down to a minimum.

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A good vitamin additive does wonders for the birds. This can be placed on the moist greens or mixed in with pet-a-mine. The dry vitamins are much easier to handle than the liquid type. In water, the vitamin A dissipates rapidly and the water container attains a slimy coating that can harbor bacteria if not constantly cleaned. I am sure that all of you know that all greens and fruit must be washed before feeding. If you handle the birds' food the same as you handle your own you will not be guilty of bringing them any infections.

Now you are ready to start selecting show stock and future breeding stock. When you are just starting out in the fancy it is difficult to be severe in culling. You must develop this trait in order to build up your flock of good,

healthy birds. Small birds, other than types of birds that are naturally small, malformed or ungainly birds should be discarded. Select only the best in type, best in size and best in conformation. The sleekness and beauty of a bird goes a long way on the judges table so build your stud of attractive birds. It costs no more to feed a good bird than it does to feed a poor one so feed the good ones.

If song is the criteria you are working toward, dispose of all the birds that have faults in their song. Some birds simply have a poor voice and these should go but sometimes one on one with a good tutor will turn that song around to develop a good songster.

Keeping a stud book is the only way in which you will be able to keep track of your birds. Band numbers of the parents and their progeny will avoid mis-mating in the future years and will also give you a firm grip on which birds produce for you. Poor producers are a waste of time and money. Keeping hens from good producers is a good line to maintain. Hens seem to pass on to female chicks the characteristics they exhibit. Sometimes the young hen in her first nesting will hungle it a bit, so if her background is a line you want to keep give her a second try next year.

Breeding for color is important. If you are breeding for a hobby and do not intend to show, the light colors are the good sellers and you will at some time have to get rid of some birds—you can't keep them all.

If you are breeding for show, the color value is dependent on the type of bird you are breeding. I find that green birds are wonderful singers and I personally prefer them but many people consider them to look like a wild bird so prefer some color more exotic.

Now that you have done all your work, your birds are selected for next year, and your youngsters are flying happily with a tutor, it is time to stop and think if you want to continue with this type of canary or do you want to try another kind. There are many to choose from. I will try to present available types that might be of interest and let's try to keep all of them in sufficient numbers to satisfy all the breeders. ➔