

My Breeding Methods
by Julio Valella
Lone Star State Canary Club
Dallas, Texas

1) *Cages*: I keep my breeding canaries in large breeding cages that I constructed myself. I have slide out dividers both wire and solid. When not breeding I take the dividers and some perches out and make them into flights.

These cages are finished in a hard glossy marine two part epoxy paint, bright white. I scrub & wash them at the beginning and end of breeding season with a solution of soapy water with chlorine at rate of 30 ppm dilution added. I rinse with same 30 ppm chlorine only clean water and let air dry. I take out all perches and wire front off to do this. I scrape the perches, then place all in the dishwasher, air dry them, and reuse.

Cage Dimensions: 16" (406mm) Tall X 24" (610mm) Wide X 13"(330mm) Deep.

Perches: 4 per cage, 2 short, stubby, way high, privacy sleep perches, the cocks prefer these...

2) *Nests*: I use larger plastic ones with a tight weave thin burlap liner. I supply a square of same burlap on cage front for "pulling", also a handful of 2" (51mm) same material strands and small squares of plain white, not bleached, unscented toilet tissue. The birds will also tear some paper and add that and the occasional soft feather...

I remove and discard the nests each time, wash the plastic nest, reapply liner, then use again. Keep same color nest per pair. I believe they prefer familiarity and seem quicker to nest when it is exactly the same nest and location as before. Once a pair performs very well I note exactly what the details were and repeat that exactly each time.

3) *Food*: I used to mix my own dry & moist nestling food. Now I use Quicko and its easier, stays fresh in my refrigerator and works very well for me.

Dry Quicko is provided at all times, changed in the morning, any remainder discarded in the evening. I figure out how much is needed per cage and provide that so there is just a bit of dust left over.

Moist Quicko with multivitamin powder (Prime), supplemented with fresh made couscous which provides the bulk of the moisture. If needed, I add a little more boiled water, allowed to cool. I also add a few granules of bee polen daily to the moist nestling mix. I mix bulk each day and provide it twice, once early morning, second late afternoon. I remove the dish to wash before lights out.

Each day I provide one of the following: wedge of baked sweet potato, thumbnail size of red delicious apple, broccoli floret head, small wedge of fresh sweet orange or ruby red grapefruit, small slice of fresh cucumber, leafy dark green such as spinach or if I don't have it I substitute thawed frozen sweet peas that I keep for this purpose. I usually rotate thru the sequence over the week, if I'm out I move ahead and try not to skip a day. This year I plan to try chickweed grown fresh for the purpose and will probably replace the broccoli which is now expensive!

4) *Lights*: I keep them at 14 1/2 hours per day of full spectrum and they get plenty of daylight from a large window. Its a small room.

5) *Hygiene*: My bird room has large ceramic tiles floor, painted walls with a commercial Seal Paint as used in industrial clean rooms. They do not shed or harbor pests and are easily kept clean.

I place cut newspaper on cage bottoms. I freeze the newspaper at -10F for several days prior to use. This kills any and all insect, larvae and spores it may harbor. I remove the top layer daily and vacuum the cage once weekly and replace with new paper stack. I vacuum up the floor daily, I use an industrial vacuum which works great.

This year I bought a new electronic Air Cleaner that ionizes and removes dust, smoke and smells,

etc. Which I run twice daily for 1/2 hour while I'm in the room cleaning, though it's on its built in programmed timer. At \$750 cost, it was a big investment. It really performs quite well and makes my room so pleasant to be in it that I enjoy spending more time there.

6) *Breeding Care*: I remove the eggs as laid and keep them in a small plastic drawer set filled with fresh canary seed. One numbered drawer for each cage. I remove the first 3 eggs and replace them the day after whether she has laid the 4th egg or not. SO when they lay #5 and #6 they end up with a small chick but only rarely do these get dumped out of the nest, and I replace them when I find it. I band at 6 to 8 days.

I rarely have a health problem with a bird and when I do, I remove that bird from the room and treat it or euthanize it if I feel its suffering and not likely to heal. Last year I suddenly lost a newly acquired, beautiful and expensive hen. I became well acquainted with the "going light" problem. I studied it and tried some treatments when another hen developed the same problem. Saved that one but went ahead and removed her to be sure she was not an infectious carrier, though I concluded this problem is a complex combination of issues and not a specific infection pathogen.

I keep new birds segregated for 21 days, adding one of mine to the new ones. This helps me make sure I'm neither bringing in a problem or giving one to the new birds. I also isolate my birds returning from a show. I keep them in the same room, just opposite wall in keeper cages which are RB35 cages. These birds end up going to shows every week or every two weeks during the show season. At the end of the shows, I put them in those cages for 21 days before I fully integrate them again. Just being cautious since I do not expect to have a problem.

Other than my routine, I pretty much let my birds have their way. I breed mated pairs whenever possible. I do trios when I have to, but in general I'm not as successful with that approach.

7) *Water*: My water system is a double bottle per cage, clear glass, each 8 oz, with LIXIT brand commercial stainless steel double ball hamster sized nozzle. I replace them once weekly, and wash everything in a dishwasher set at 180F temperature. Hot water, heavy wash, long cycle and air dried.

I have sent these drinkers, after using for a week, to a lab for analysis of culture.. The report was "Clean", exactly same #s as the "control" tap water which is what I use. Fresh Dallas city tap water is very clear, no sediments, chlorinated to around 10 ppm free chlorine. I've been doing this system for many years with success and never once a bacterial or viral infection problem.

8) *Clutches*: Most years I average around 10 or so chicks per pair. A few years have been poor and I've done 3 or 4 average, a few exceptional years I've gotten 13 or 14 per pair. In general, all my classic melanins have done better than the new color melanins or the lipochromes. This is also true among the Mosaics of each.

I usually do at least 3 nests per pair. Some pairs will do only 2 nests but generally I will not keep those hens unless they are superior birds otherwise. Many pairs do 4 nests. Hens after their 3rd year laying, tend to do no more than 3 and when they only do 2, I retire them. My average is around 3.4 or 3.5 nests per pair per year.

That's my experience. I hope others will share.

Cheers, Jay