

Having Trouble? On Snags Met In Canary Rooms

Sunday, 31 May 2009

The average time taken by hen a canary to complete incubation is 13 days. For example, if a hen began to sit on her eggs on June 7, the chicks should hatch out on the 20th. This period may vary, however, according to the number of eggs for it is a common practice among breeders to remove the first three eggs as they are laid, and return them to the nest on the evening that the third egg is deposited.

Therefore, should a fourth or fifth egg be laid, these may well hatch on the 21st or even the 22nd. I stress this point because many beginners in the Fancy become impatient to see their newly hatched chicks, any interference with either nest or eggs at this important stage could prove disastrous.

It can usually be ascertained whether hatching has occurred, the front of the cage, if the expected has happened, faint cheeps will be discernible. Failing this, one should take a look when the hen is off the nest.

Never flush a hen from the nest in order to gain this information, for by doing her confidence in you will be lost, and this may also cause her to cover the chicks too tightly and also to neglect feeding them.

I know that there is many different systems advocated for the successful rearing of young Canaries, but I will only outline my own method, which I have used successfully over the past 20 years.

On the evening before an egg is expected to hatch out, half fill two basins with mixed seed and pour in water until the seed is just covered. The amount of seed can, of course, be varied according to the number of hatchings to be catered for. After completing this operation attention can be given to the pairs expecting chicks.

Begin by offering a quarter of a teaspoon of pure yolk of hard-boiled egg, which has first been passed through a fine meshed tea strainer or sieve. Provide this same quantity both morning and evening on the first two days. On the third day, a little chickweed or other green food can be offered at midday, and from the fourth day some of the white of the egg can be included with the yolk together with an equal part of a proprietary rearing food, and add a little water just to make it crumbly moist.

From midday of the fourth day, a pot of soaked seed should be given in addition to the green food. As the chicks grow so the amounts can be increased.

On this diet young will develop quite rapidly fully feathered at 15 days old.

During the first three days after hatching, it is wise to make a quick inspection of the floor on the cage to make sure no chicks have been pulled from the nest accidentally. If this should occur, and upon picking up a nestling you will find that it feels cold and lifeless, it may be resuscitated by placing it in your cupped hands and breathing gently between the two thumbs for a few minutes until the chick gets really warm.

If a spark of life is present it will be rekindled and slight movements will be felt. When these become stronger, the chick can be returned to the nest where the hen will "complete the cure".

Always count the chicks when they gape to be fed, especially if there are five in the nest. If you look closely when the hen is feeding her brood you will notice that four of the five youngsters always get the lion's share while the youngest, although it gapes to be fed, is ignored completely.

There are two possible courses of action that can be taken if this happens. One is transfer the chick to another hen that has three chicks of the same age, and the other is to use a hand feeder until the chick is strong enough to compete with its nest mates at feeding time. Of the two alternatives I prefer the former, as this does not involve any interference with the nest.

One of the first signs that all is not well in the nest is the condition of the chicks' covering of down, which should appear soft and fluffy. If this presents a damp appearance and the chick display a hint of sluggishness when the hen offers to feed them, it is well to suspect the trouble. A new nest should be constructed in a spare nest pan and the youngsters transferred to it immediately.

If a dead chick has been the cause of the trouble it will be found flattened on the bottom of the old nest. The warmth from the brooding hen can quickly promote decomposition and if speedy action is not taken the remaining chicks may well be lost.

By R.W. Nash