

Guide to breeding and caring for canaries.

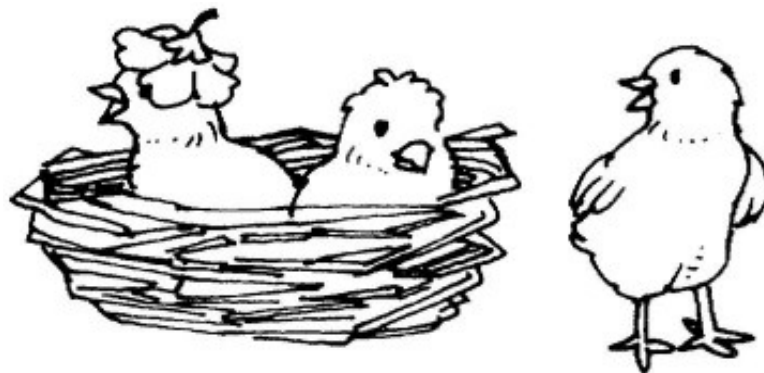
The Practical Canary Handbook

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Chick Development- General Guidelines	
Hatching	13 days at the earliest, often later
Feathers Begin to Appear	4-5 days
Banding With Closed Bands	5-7 days depending on chick growth
Eyes Open	7 days
Feather Quills Well Developed	10-12 days old
Leave The Nest	18 days
Wean	23-25 days
Baby Molt	8 to 10 weeks

These dates are approximate- some chicks leave the nest several days earlier or later, for example. Weaning is generally earlier for first clutch chicks than for second clutch ones.



**Quick Tips-
Things I Have Learned About Breeding Canaries**

- Canaries, like people, are individuals with their own personalities and preferences. There is no “one size fits all” truth about breeding canaries; though a few general guidelines are helpful, canaries can always manage to surprise even an experienced breeder. Be prepared for the unexpected and adapt to the needs of your birds.
- There is no substitute for careful husbandry. Paying close attention to what is going on in the birdroom can prevent small problems from becoming large ones.
- Relax. Birds have been managing to breed for thousands of years. Becoming stressed out over the bird’s failure to proceed according to the breeder’s plans will not make the birds breed any better. The birds will generally get things sorted out satisfactorily if left to their own devices. I once read in a vintage breeding book that a bottle of whiskey was a helpful supply to have on hand in the birdroom during breeding season- not for the birds, for the breeder!
- When problems arise- and if you breed birds long enough, they *will* arise- don’t panic.
- Contrary to conventional wisdom, you don’t have to tiptoe around your birds. Maintain your usual routine during breeding season. If you vacuum the floor of the bird room every day with a shop vac, go ahead and do so during the breeding season. Bump the cages a little, watch tv or listen to the radio . . . As long as the birds are accustomed to the routine, they will be fine.
- Always have a backup plan. First time hens who sat beautifully may become startled when the eggs begin to hatch and refuse to cover the babies, hens die during incubation, hens quit feeding . . . Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst- try to set as many of your hens on eggs on the same day so you’ll have alternative nests in which to place babies and always have a good foster hen ready.
- Have a container of a commercial handfeeding formula on hand just in case all your backups fail and you have to handfeed. The commercial food is nutritious and easy to use. Why add the extra work of making a homemade hand feeding formula to all the other work of breeding season? Store the formula in the freezer to maintain freshness, but allow it to warm to room temperature before mixing it.
- “Feeder” males are worth their weight in gold and have saved many a nest of babies- if a male feeds like a champion but bombs at the shows, keep him anyway. He just might save a future champion!
- Don’t rush your birds- most problems occur because the breeder tries to push birds which aren’t ready for one reason or another into breeding. Birds allowed to come into condition naturally will produce fewer clear eggs and will sit and feed better. You may start later than you wanted to, but you’ll end up at the same place in the end- and with fewer headaches.
- Don’t breed poor breeders or poor feeders regardless of what they do at the shows or you can end up with a roomful of birds who all have these negative traits. I personally never breed a flaky hen (one who startles off the nest easily, sits too tight or not enough, etc.) more than twice- every hen gets a second chance, but if they are still giving you problems after the second nest they’ll do it every time. Hens which make the breeder stand on his or her head to make sure everything comes out okay aren’t worth the effort.
- Develop and maintain a network of “breeder buddies”- these folks can provide advice and much needed support.

- Keep notes on your birds throughout the year, including pairings you would like to make. With all the work and general busyness of getting the birdroom situated and birds set up, often one will forget exactly what one had planned or find oneself wondering why one wanted a certain pairing. Good, complete records are invaluable!
- Hens can be wild cards in breeding. Hens carry the song of their fathers; while their brothers may have similar songs, listening to the father is preferable. The hen's call notes can sometimes indicate what they carry, but are much less reliable than hearing the father.
- Don't sell hens too quickly- too many novices buy hens, try them out for a year and then sell them before they can make a proper determination about what the hens are carrying.
- Sometimes a different pairing will produce better offspring. If a hen comes from good quality stock, give her at least two seasons with different mates before deciding to sell her. Breeding her sons and grandsons back to her may be the best way to achieve stock of her caliber.
- Many experienced breeders believe that the best way to introduce a particular "sound" into one's stock is to bring in a hen carrying the song you'd like to have- using a male is much less effective.
- Using a tutor will teach the birds new notes, but it will not be a part of the birds' genetic song- if one wants a sound to remain, it needs to be bred into the birds.
- Purchase new breeding stock well in advance of the start of breeding season to allow the birds to become adjusted to their new environment.
- Be aware that if breeding stock is purchased from a breeder who has a very different breeding schedule from that of your own (he begins in March, but you would like to begin in January), the birds are going to have difficulty adjusting the first breeding season. Sometimes no matter what one does the birds will simply not come into proper condition until later into the breeding season. In this case it is best to allow them to come into condition slowly and just set them up when one is setting up one's other birds for a second round. I have battled with hens several times in these cases and the hens will win every time!
- Do not breed more birds than you can handle. Many novices breed large numbers of birds, especially when they have not won at the shows- after all, more birds mean more chances to win! The trick is to know when to stop- in the excitement of breeding season it is easy to lose sight of the fact that a lot of birds means a lot of work for many, many months. The experienced breeder knows how many birds he can handle and resists the temptation to breed more than that quantity.

Breeding-Related Health Issues

Things Which Can Affect Fertility in Both Males and Hens

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