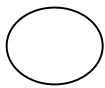


## The Perch

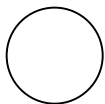
Something taken for granted can make so much difference.

When using Breeding Cabinets or an Aviary, it is important to have good perches that do not move and are comfortable for the birds feet. If the perch is slippery or moving, good mating may NOT occur.

I prefer wooden perches, I find plastic & fibreglass too expensive & hard to keep clean. I have no particular preference to type of wood, as long as the grain is straight and there are no splinters. Dowels from a hardware store will do the job, or square section with the square edges knocked off with a file or plane.



I have no particular preference for size other than I don't like them greater than 15mm ( $\frac{5}{8}$ " ) or smaller than 9mm ( $\frac{3}{8}$ " ) when it comes to shape I



prefer oval but square or round will suffice

To attach in a breeding cabinet I cut a V in one end of the perch to fit against the wire, and in the other I drive a small panel pin which I cut off with pliers, leaving about 3mm ( $\frac{1}{8}$ " ). This causes the end

against the back of the cabinet to be away from the back wall, which stops mites and other insects hiding there. If you have a bad mite problem you can use mite powder on the end of the perch, which helps prevent them getting to the birds.

It is essential to keep the perches clean to stop soreness and foot ailments; the best way to do this is scrape along them with an old hacksaw blade. This not only cleans but roughs them up a little.

## “Keep your Perches Clean”

Like everything there is an exception to the rule. If I have a bird with a claw that won't close around the perch, I use a highly polished metal perch placed at an angle of around 50° (floor to top of box). This causes the bird to slide down, which in turn causes the bird to close its claw to stop slipping. Ideal for this is an old car aerial cut to size. It takes a couple of weeks to fix the problem, and then you can return to your normal perches.

## The Drinker

The drinker is a most essential part of the accessories for any type of cage. It is essential that you have a good, fresh & clean, source of water available at all times.

Any water container could do the job, but some need to have the water changed daily to prevent pollution and bacteria. The supply of water should not become a daily chore if it can be avoided. To make life easier I use glass bottles with a 3mm ( $\frac{1}{8}$ " ) hole drilled in the lid which when turned upside down and supported by wire provides a ready source of water that is difficult to pollute. The Canary soon learns that to break the surface tension of the water allows a stream of water to run down into its beak. For

added cleanliness the bottle can be hung on the outside with access gained via a hole in the wire. This method is not the only one but is used by most breeders, who have a lot of birds.

I use a product added to the water called Aviclens™ made by Vetafarm. This is a relatively inexpensive product that helps to prevent bacteria and algae in the water.



# Australian Fife Canary

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## The Bath

The Bath is not in my opinion an essential, however the birds love it, and they seem invigorated afterwards. You need to be careful that the day is warm, because you don't want your birds to get a chill. Some breeders put a couple of drops of glycerin in the water, which will give the feathers a nice sheen. Be careful, too much and all your birds will look like they have been in an oil slick.

The other issue with baths is that you need to ensure that your breeding box doesn't get too wet or it may become mouldy and smelly. Often it is wise to clean the cage after the bath.

Another perspective: Cyril Kirby in his 1957 book *Canary Breeding in Australia* writes, "One of the



most important items in canary breeding, and, in fact, in all kind of bird keeping, is the use of the bath.

One must stress the point, as it plays an essential part in the success of bird-keeping. The bath should be given to the birds at least three (3) times a week. It keeps the birds fit and well, and also helps to keep them free of vermin. When you give the bath do not let the birds soak themselves with water to such an extent that they cannot fly on to the

perches. Also on no account leave the bath hanging on the cage front all day, as after they have used it and soiled the water the birds will often use it for drinking....."

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## GRIT

There is no debate that birds eat grit. There is however debate as to why they do. Some believe it's the grit that helps grind the food in the gut; others believe that it is a birds natural instinct and is only for the birds to get minerals for the formation of feathers and growth of bones. There are many types of grit commercially available, however some are only crushed granite and add very little minerals to the birds diet. Calcium of lime is an essential

element for healthy birds and a large amount is continually passed in the excreta. For this reason I use fine shell grit which can be purchased from produce stores which is high in Calcium of lime. Grit should be provided in containers and not just thrown onto the floor where it becomes fouled by the birds' droppings. You'll notice that the birds will rip through the grit until their mineral levels are ok, then usage will reduce.

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## Cuttlefish

No we don't feed the whole fish! For canaries, we feed the cuttlefish bone. It is the bony skeleton of the cuttlefish and can be found on the beach after a storm, or purchased from the pet shop. The cuttlefish is made almost entirely of Lime, and is a useful source of Calcium.



This can be put between the wires and the birds will pick at it, or you can easily crush and serve mixed with soft food / egg & biscuit. Cuttlefish although being high in calcium like shell grit, should not be considered as an alternative.