

Australian Fife Canary

Showing your Birds

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Tim is/was initially from the US did a stint in Great Britain and is now in Australia, so you have to forgive his spelling.

Training Your Birds.

It is important that before you consider showing birds that you train and acclimatise your birds to the show cage specific to the variety. Show cages¹ are small and each bird needs to be comfortable with the changed environment and be able to locate both the seed and water.

To accustom your birds to the show cage, I believe you need to start when the bird has just started to feed itself, by hanging a show cage on the front of the breeding cabinet, allowing the young birds to move freely between the two. During this time I provide a little green food in the show cage to encourage the birds to enter, and also the birds see the show cage as a place for treats.



After a few weeks I begin to pay attention to individual birds by allowing each bird to spend a small amount of time alone in the show cage, but keeping the cage within site of other birds. I slowly increase the time and separation from other birds until the new bird is happy and content in the show cage, without jumping and climbing all over the wire. Always make sure that the bird is finding the seed and more importantly the water. Unfortunately some specialist societies still maintain the archaic practice of having the drinker on the outside of the cage, which makes it much harder to train the bird to drink and makes transportation more difficult. If you make it a habit to run your bird into the show cage using a thin stick each time, you will eventually find that the bird will practically go into the cage before you do any more than place the open door of the show cage, against the open door of the breeding cabinet. Having your birds' well-trained means that your birds will not get feather damage by being caught by hand.

The next step is to get your bird to react to a hand movement and not overreact. Your Bird should stand still and tall without stretching. Remember the Judge is trying to compare the bird to his mental image of the standard therefore he needs the bird to stand still on the perch, and to change perches on the movement of a hand.

I am a little bit fanatical and I even take the birds for a drive because in most cases you have to transport your birds to the show and you want them to be at their best.

Entering the Competition.

The first thing you need to know is the rules of the show, which is obtained from the society or club that is running the show. Rules could include what goes on the floor of the cage, when the entries close, what "Schedule" is being used, and when you have to have your birds at the show which is called benching.

The Schedule, which could be listed or it may say the "Standard Schedule" is a list of the classes that are going to be judged. The Standard schedule is the classes that have been decided by the specialist society.

Each class has a number and a description.

Example FF1 Clear or Ticked Yellow
 FF2 Lightly Variegated Yellow.

Now you might come across acronyms that initially can be confusing, however they are over time easily learnt.

Example FF Fife Fancy
 L.V. Lightly variegated ²
 H.V. Heavily variegated ³
 A.C. Any Color
 A.O.C Any other Color
 Clear A bird with NO dark feathers.
 Ticked Means birds with a very small patch of dark feather usually less than the 20mm.

 Self A dark feathered bird that contains NO light feathers
 Foul A bird that would have been classified self, except for a light feather in the wing or tail

You also need to understand the basics of Color such as Faun, Cinnamon, Blue, Green, Yellow, Buff.

When you have registered your birds you will be given cage stickers which need to be placed on the cage in the correct position, ask the show secretary if your not sure.

Day of the Show

You need to prepare your birds well, they need to be put in the cage with the correct sticker or they will be wrong classed⁴. Check that your birds are clean including their feet. A lot of breeders give the bath about 3 days before the show and sometimes with just a couple of drips of Glycerine⁵ added to the water, be careful to much and you'll end up with sticky birds.

On the day of the show, arrive early so your birds are settled after the trip. Make sure they have sufficient seed and water and check again that the correct bird is in the right cage. Allow the steward to bench your birds and depending on the show, leave until your allowed to return or stick around if this is allowed.

Remember to let the Judge do his thing and at the end respect the Judges decision.

¹ Show cages are specific to each variety of Canaries. The best way to get cages is talk with the secretary of your local bird club who should know where you would be able to purchase. Your show cages must be correct and clean.

² Lightly variegated is less than 50% dark

³ Heavily variegated means greater than 50%. If you have a bird which is on the border ie 50% you need to get a Judge to certify what the bird should be judged as.

⁴ Wrong classed, means the bird doesn't match the class on the sticker and wont be judged.

⁵ Glycerine gives the bird a nice sheen if used sparingly. Obtained from the Drug Store or Supermarket