Show Budgerigar

Creating a Plan

When many decide to get into the show budgerigar side they are usually looking at the open class birds on the bench, at shows, on web sites or in books. The breeders of these birds have been breeding for many years or decades. Some like Gerald Binks have put their whole life into it.

The new breeders/novices start with dreams of breeding the top show birds in the first or at least the second season. This is not, in the majority of novices, going to happen. The only way to get close to this is to have an endless supply of money and to start with buying the top birds.

So what is the new show breeder to do? With my short experience in this area, I think I am on to the right direction. Make a plan. As many in different occupations say we don't plan to fail, just fail to plan.

Mine is a five year plan. I am currently in my second year of my plan and have feed back that I am on the right track.

My Surgested Plan.

1st Year. Start by joining a club and listen to all the members. See who is winning and ask if you can visit their aviary.
While there, ask questions.

- How have they set up their breeding rooms?
- What are they feeding their birds in the flights?
- What do they look for in a bird to see if they are coming into breeding condition?
- How do they set up their birds? Some put the hen in first for a few days before introducing the cock.
- What do they feed the breeding pair?
- How do they set up the nest box and what type and size is it.
- What do they feed the pair when the chicks hatch?

.....and so forth.
Don't stop at the first Aviary. Visit as many as you can. Everyone has a different way to do things. Be advised by them and act on it.

Go to shows and try to get a job stewarding.
Stewarding is bringing the birds from the holding area to the "Bench" for the judge. If you are lucking the judge will tell you what he is looking at and why he picked one bird over another. You will learn to tell the difference between Double factor spangles, Lutinos and Dark eyed clears. You will learn to recognise the difference between grey wings and cinnamons. You will also see why some birds are penalised.

After a few shows and visits to aviaries and attending club meetings, 6 months or so has pasted, you can start to think about either the birds you have and/or the birds you are going to buy. You start to think about the aviary you have and/or going to build. Some members might give you birds to start you off and even help with your first pairing.

2nd Year Now comes the crunch. 12 months has past since you though that it might be good to breed and show birds. You are now alone in your aviary with your birds breeding with chicks. With the experience you have had and back up of the members in your club you should have the confidence to take the chicks from the egg to the perch, to the nursery and in to the stock cage. You must remember that this takes time. The chicks will be in the nursery from the time they are capable of feeding themselves until 60 days old.

It is at this stage that the new breeder evaluated the birds. This is when the first heart aches start. He looks at his new chicks and compares them to the birds in the top breeder’s aviaries or the show bench or the book he is reading by the top breeders. Guest what. They are a bit small. They don't seem to have that puffy head, the spots are small, the head is pointy the bird won't stand on the

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perch straight enough... etc.
The breeder now is despondent. What happened..? Well nothing went wrong. You have just set the foundation to what could be a great stud. You have to wait. This is a chick still a nest feather, an ugly duck. What you first called a pink blob is now feathered and not the Miss or Mister World of the budgie world.
Unfortunately this is the time when most new breeders sell their chicks. Thinking that they won't amount to much and that it was a waste of time breeding them. Don't do it!

The next thing to do is to make sure you look after these birds. Remember what the top breeders do and move them to the stock cages and leave them until they are 90 days old. They should now b undressing there baby clothes and moulting into their kids outfits. After their moult it is time to move them into their own flight and leave them to mature. Come back in 6 months time to see how they have matured and you should now see the effects of time and your good management. You might be surprised.

At 12 months old they still have not reached their peak, it won't be until they are 18 months that you will see the best in them.

3rd Year Ok next stage. If you have a large Aviary and can have many birds, great but for many, culling starts at 12 months. By now you should have been to many shows and seen the quality of what is being shown. You should have spent 3/4 of the time looking at the novice section to see what they have brought on to the bench. Hopefully you will be arrogant enough to think to yourself. "I have a better one at home; I could have beaten that one." This is when your "Eye for detail" starts to develop.
You should know what birds are best to keep and what should be culled. (Culled meaning to remove by selling or given away). Where do you start? Those 3 pair that you might have started with had 4 chicks each in two clutches each. You now have 24 chicks. This is where the help from good Club members will be essential. I would try to end up with 1: 2 cocks to hens. Now you might say that I only had two cocks in all that breeding, well unless they are bad I might keep them. If they are bad I would think about out crossing a good cock or two.

Now you should start thinking about pairing for the next season. Look at relationships and don't forget the original birds you started with.

It should be from the next pairings that you should start to see an improvement. So long as you have paired them correctly. This is where the help from good Club members will be essential. Now you can start to think about your Show team. You might have a few chicks from the previous season that has improved enough to be tried on the bench. You might have some Nest feathers, (Chicks that haven't gone through their first moult) that might be good enough for the bench. Put them up. Showing birds in Australia is cheap. It costs 50 cents per bird. If the birds are not good enough to win the judge is usually happy to discuss the down falls. This is a learning stage.

4th year you might have had a few places or even a few wins. You have had your ups and downs. You have had deaths and successes. You know that you have a long way to go but your birds are improving and you involvement with the club has been paying off through hard work and assistance given. You gone to many shows and can see what is needed in your birds to advance. You now have a good team and you start to get constant wins and the points gathered start to elivate you to intermediate status.

5th Year This is the year you need to work hard and hopefully be elevated to Intermediate Class and then you can start to think about the top. By the end of the year, you start to compare your birds to the photos that brought you into this fancy those 5 years ago and think it I am now getting close……..

As I said I am in my second year and have had great assistance by the members of my club. I have shown in my first show and came second with one bird. I am now preparing a team of 6 to go to the next show. This is with the help of a club member. He thinks I have a very good shot at two firsts. I might win I might not place. I know one thing, I will be leaving the show with more knowledge than

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when I started and it will be another stepping block on to more successes in the future.

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