Budgerigar Breeding

Points to Consider BEFORE Breeding (2 articles in 1)

There are 2 articles here one by Kaz and one by Nerwen on Points to Consider BEFORE Breeding and You will not make money breeding Budgies - Please read BOTH, some information is duplicated but both articles are the views of the author and very informational.

Breeding Budgies.....points to consider BY Kaz

1. How old are your budgies ?
For the sake of your budgies health, the minimum age for a hen and cock should be 12 months. Any younger and a hen can become egg bound and need urgent vet care. The maximum age for a hen to be bred should be 4 years and a cock at 5-6 years. At four years of age a hen struggles to produce enough calcium and may have issues laying an egg and become egg bound also. If you are in any doubt about your new budgies age with regard to breeding keep them longer before you begin to breed and ask for help on here in working out its age. A coloured cere is NO INDICATION of breeding age as a coloured cere can happen from 3 months onwards.

2. Do you have a plan and money set aside for vet care if needed ? Many young people enter into budgie breeding with parents saying..."yes, go ahead" but often the very same parents have no desire to allow veterinary care for any sick birds should the breeding project fail or present problems. Please check with your parents to be sure that they WILL allow a vet visit or two and pay for it, should the need arise. Make sure you have saved enough money to cover all the extra expenses. Breeding budgies for pocket money is no quick way to financial success. In reality it might well end up costing you more than a potential sale of babies.

3. Have you done your research and asked all the harder questions of responsible and experienced breeders (not the kid next door who has done breeding once or twice) ? Have you knowledge of the history and health of your breeding pair ? A pair of budgies newly bought for breeding purposes need both a settling in period of time before you start breeding them and you also need to know their history and their personality before proceeding to breed with them. Stress equals illness in budgies...stress from being caught, and put in a petshop, and brought to your home and put in a breeder cage...all these things CAN and do often cause budgies to get sick and die partway through breeding if you put them straight down to breed the second you get them home.

4. Your budgies are mating...does that mean a "pregnancy" and you need a nest box ? No. Budgies from a young age often indulge in recreational sex, just because you see a pair of budgies mating does NOT mean there will be eggs or does NOT mean you have to put a nest box in their cage and set them up for future babies. YOU providing them a nest box gives them PERMISSION to lay eggs and have babies and a place to do it, regardless of age. Refer back to point one for age of breeding budgies.

5. What food must I provide to help my budgies breed ? Although breeding budgies need good food to withstand the rigors of breeding and raising a successful clutch, the foods you need should be the food they have been getting on a regular basis anyway...fresh vegies, especially greens, soft foods, quality seeds, pellets if you use them, etc. For added calcium requirements some liquid calcium added to the drinking water of birds you intent to breed would be beneficial, as would the addition of a cuttlebone to their cage. Bear in mind that cuttlebones arent always the best source of calcium and often are more something the budgies likes to "play with" or destroy just for an activity.

6. Do you have a safe place for the budgies to breed...cage and location ? Best place for a breeding pair is in a breeding cage of their own and not in an aviary with a pile of other birds and lots of nestboxes.....i.e. Colony style.

Breeding is a time of stress for birds and birds get sick and die from stress. To give them the best chance of raising a clutch of babies successfully, you need to make it a stress free event. A separate breeding cage will help as there will be no interference in their nest from other birds, no destruction of their eggs or chicks from others hens who decide they want that particular nest, and assuming you have the breeder cabinet in a safe place. If you don't have a breeding room, then your bedroom might be the best place for them. Try to have it a cat and dog free space during this time for safety and reduction of stress on the birds. A breeder cage tucked into a dark wardrobe will not be a good place for them.

7. Climate and temperature for optimal breeding try and make the temperature and conditions the best and most comfortable for your breeding pairs. Bear in mind too warm and dry and environment may affect your eggs hatching or not. Try to not have your pairs in a cage situated in a draughty and cold area.

8. Have you set up your perches properly ? the perches in your breeding cabinet must be sturdy and not too thin for the mating act to be successful. Perches that roll around and are too thin to grip properly will not help the mating or fertilization of eggs. You may well end up with clutch after clutch of clear eggs if you do not address the perch problems. Age will also affect fertility...too young and the eggs wont be fertilized properly. Too old and the same end result.

9. Nest boxes and cages ? If you have to use a nest box in a normal type cage, try to attach it to the exterior of the cage and higher rather than lower at floor level. This can be attached by tying or wiring the nest box securely to the exterior of the cage with using either a hatch door as entry point to the nest box hole or by cutting a section out of your cage for entry (you can always patch the cage again later). Please make sure the cage is at least 2 ft by 2 ft by 2ft to ensure plenty of space for fledging youngsters. Try and have two perches so that parents can fly back and forth as part of the mating ritual to encourage breeding. A cramped breeder cage may well contribute to the parents attacking their own youngsters once fledged as their is no space and the babies find their way back into the nest box while the Mum tries to lay more eggs.

10. Your anxiety and interference with the breeding pair..... it is very easy to get excited over the prospect of breeding your budgies. Try to give the birds some privacy even if that mean covering two to three sides of their cage if it is in your bedroom. A breeder cage put in a high traffic area of the home may not get you the results you need as it may be stressful to the birds. Lots of anxious checking and rechecking by you also may cause problems for the birds feelings of safety and serenity in incubating eggs and raising a clutch. Try NOT to handle the eggs and shift them about in the nest box. If you need to candle the eggs to test if fertile or not, invest in a flexible shaft candling torch.This can be used without moving any eggs. Touching eggs will contaminate them with germs from your hands. Moving eggs will also upset the order in which the hen rotates the eggs to keep them at the best temperature for hatching. There is no real need for an inexperienced person to write on eggs. You can write on a card on the outside of the cage when the first eggs was laid and so on and then know when roughly to expect your first hatchlings.

11. How and when to check the nestbox If you know you have eggs in a nest box and wish to check, try and do this while the hen is out of the nest box as many hens get agitated and kick the eggs around in the nest box while you are trying to look. This will cause addled eggs and those eggs will NOT hatch. She may also pierce the eggs with her claws while you are trying to look, causing death of chick and again eggs that wont develop. Best time to check a nest box is while the hen is out eating...early morning or early evening or both times.
Care of baby budgies in the nest

12. Homes for the babies ? Have you a plan that finds homes for your babies ? Try and remember that pet shops do not pay a lot for your babies so they would not be an ideal solution and make you wealthy. Are you prepared to keep any and do you have enough housing for them ? If you keep any can you identify them and stop them breeding with brothers and sisters ? If some of your babies are hatched in a handicapped state or become handicapped (i.e. Flightless, splay legged, twisted feet and legs, rickets etc) are you prepared to keep them and accommodate their special needs ? Have you thought ahead to the best life you can offer your babies in the future ?

13. Have you prepared a care sheet for your babies future parents and have you thought hard about what you want from the adoptive parents of a baby you have cared for ?

14. Have you hand rearing formula, crop needles and lots of time and expertise to raise chicks that may well be abandoned by their parents and go unfed or do you have work or school commitments ?

15. Examine your motives for wanting to breed your birds. Weigh up all the pros and cons. Are you doing this for yourself or the bird ? Have you considered ALL the implications of what may well be the end result of doubling or even tripling your flock ? Are you thinking the birds need to breed will make them unhappy if they dont (wrong, by the way) ? Be honest with yourself and do not blame the birds "need to breed" on you just wanting to do this.

16. Do you have FULL PARENTAL SUPPORT if underaged and do your parents have an agreement with you to cover any vets fees should they incur ?

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YOU WILL NOT GAIN MONEY BY BREEDING BUDGIES! By Nerwen

There are many things that need to be considered before a nest box is even put down on the shopping list.

Age:
The age of the bird must be known so that you know they are mental and physically ready to rear offspring. The youngest that most breeders accept as safe is a year. Many feel that 18 months is better. Budgies themselves are physically ready to breed by the age of 6 months, but this equals in humans 13 -14 years of age. They are simply not mental ready for the task of breeding. They can start to eat eggs, which once started can me hard to stop a bird from continuing, they can abandon nests and eggs or worse attach they young when they hatch.

Birds from a breeder you should expect a correct month of birth if not the actual date of hatching. I'm not meaning off the top of they heads but they should have it some where in their records. Older birds in the show side should have coloured bands on their legs which will give you a year of hatching. Ones from pet shops can come with leg bands but if you clearly tell them why you want to know the correct age they should be able to tell what info the breeder gave when selling them. You still take these ages at a risk that they picked a figure from air to tell you for a sale.

You also need to know if your birds are too old to breed. Hen should not be used over the age of three, sometime a breeder will removed eggs to another clutch on a four year old hen if the hen if is high value. Males shouldn't be used over the age of 6.

Once you know if your birds are ready or not you can look at other issues.

Health:
Both the mother and farther need to be in tip top health. This is making sure there are none of the normal signs of illness: Sitting fluffed up continually, Discoloration/discharge present on feathers above nostrils, Lethargy, Vomiting, and Inability to balance, Stains or accumulated poop on vent feathers. If you can't tell this apart rethink your idea of breeding them right now and study behaviour. You can also take the birds to your vet to get an all well check up. They also need to be in breeding condition. The hens will have dark brown cere or turning brown while the males cere will be a deep and even blue.

Relationship:
The closer the bird the more risk of defects and problems arising. Beginner breeders should not even t think of starting of with line breeding it takes a lot of effort to do correctly. The closest most people deem acceptable is grandparent to grandchild or aunt uncle to nephew niece. But Line breeding or inbreeding can not be taken lightly

Set up:
Yes using a normal bird cage can work but you need to think about where to put the box, and if it's inside the cage is there enough room for 6-10 birds still? Making sure you have enough clear space around the sides or ground to either hang or play extra seed dishes and fresh food plates.

Hand feeding:
You will need to have hand feeding formula before any babies appear for the in case moment of having to feed a newborn chick. Added to the food are syringes for problem feeders and a spoon bent into a spout. It would also help for you to visit a breeder or a vet that handles bird who can show you the way to feed them correctly.

Afterwards:
What are you going to do with the chicks? Give them away to friends and family, sell them privately?, sell them to a pet shop or even keep them. What ever you choose to do it needs to be thought over first.

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Author: Kaz and Nerwen
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