

How to guide - Breeding

If you keep your Budgerigars in an aviary or cages together, they may start to bond ready for breeding if they are old enough. If you are not breeding for exhibition purposes and you are not bothered what colours you breed then this method will be fine. If you are pairing for specific colours or for exhibition purposes then it's probably wise to keep the cocks and hens apart for a few weeks to break any "bond" prior to pairing them as you wish to do so.

Many people choose to breed with one pair per breeding cage but another option for the hobbyist is to colony breed, this means that nest boxes are placed in the aviary where the birds are kept, if you use this method then it's wise to put up more nest boxes than the amount actually required and also to try and keep them all at the same height to stop the pairs squabbling over the higher boxes.

Wooden or plastic nest boxes are the norm nowadays as opposed to older traditional methods like coconut husks. Either wood shavings or a dedicated product should be used within the box on top of a concave in order to protect the eggs from becoming broken.

If the pair you have chosen yourself don't start to bond in around a week its likely they are either not in breeding condition or they simply are not interested in each other so one of the pair may need to be changed.

If you decide to pair in the winter months it's a good idea to extend daylight hours using artificial light, increase the hours over a few weeks prior to breeding up to around 12 to 15 hours a day and this will usually bring the birds into breeding condition, the addition of Eucalyptus, Willow or certain Fruit Tree branches will also help this process. It may also be necessary to add items to your feeding regime to aid the hens, especially with regards to egg production.

Some birds will breed at around 6 months but Ideally hens should not be used until around 9 months and cock birds at around 12 months as they tend to mature a little later. Budgies can breed up to 5 to 6 years or maybe longer depending on the type of bird you have; some pet type birds have been known to breed at an older age but with exhibition stock its usually between 1 and 4 years.

Breeding pairs ideally need the following things in order to help things along, sturdy perches in order to mate successfully, quality seed, clean fresh water and grit as a minimum. You can also add mineral blocks and/or cuttlefish bone.

Hopefully after a week to 10 days the first eggs may start to appear and if the hen sits the eggs immediately you can usually tell if the eggs are fertile or not after 5 to 6 days. The usual period for incubation is 18 days so if the eggs are fertile then it's time for the first chick to hatch. Chicks are normally weaned between 5 and 6 weeks old, just check that they are actually starting to pick up seed prior to moving them into a cage or small aviary/flight cage. If you have decided to colony breed a close eye needs to be kept on the nest boxes and chicks so that "other" birds don't attack other pairs chicks in the box or when they are fledged.

It is also a wise decision in today's world to ring your babies with a closed ring at around 10 days, each ring is individual to each bird with a number and the current year on it, this helps in two main areas. 1 - It aids record keeping so that directly related birds are not paired together. 2 - When you sell your birds it provides proof of the age of the bird which gives the purchaser peace of mind.

There are many breeders within the UKBC who will provide assistance with any areas of breeding, simply log on to one of the UKBC Facebook groups and "ask your questions".

