

Want to Breed Budgies/Parakeets?

How can I start breeding my parakeets (budgies)?

Q: How do I go about breeding my parakeets (budgies). I have four birds, all in the same cage. I purchased a nest, and I'm not sure of their sexes; can you please help me make a new addition to my loving family?

A: Although budgies are colony breeders, most breeding pairs do better when separated from other budgies and kept one pair per cage. Budgies may fight among themselves over nest boxes, damage eggs and even kill chicks if they are not all nesting in the same cycle. If choosing to colony breed, provide a spacious flight of 6 feet or more in length, to cut down on squabbling. To reduce territorial fighting further, provide each pair with a nest box, plus at least one additional nest box for choice.

The safer way to go is to separate the pairs by placing each in their own cage with a nest box attached. Each box should contain a concave block inside and a handful of clean, white pine shavings. The nest block prevents eggs from rolling around in the box, and the shavings keep the eggs from accumulating additional dirt while providing a little added protection.

Budgie pairs should begin laying eggs within a few weeks and incubation requires 18 days from when the female begins sitting the eggs full time. Budgie chicks fledge and leave the nest at about four weeks and are taught which foods to eat by their father. Remove weaned chicks by 38 to 42 days of age, or the father will become aggressive toward the young in an effort to court the hen and begin a new clutch. All budgies need to be rested after raising two full clutches of young. Remove nest boxes and allow pairs flight to exercise and rebuild their strength.

Provide a varied diet of clean seed and pellets/extruded product, spray millet, fresh green leafy and red/orange/yellow vegetables (i.e., carrots with tops, dandelion greens, kale, parsley, spinach, broccoli, Swiss chard, mustard greens, beet tops, corn on the cob, etc.), a little fruit, spray millet, fresh clean water and plenty of fresh cuttlebone. Cuttlebone provides the necessary calcium it takes to form the eggshell, as a deficiency in calcium will lead to severe egg-binding. Cuttlebone is a dietary necessity year round, as is dietary iodine, such as Lugol's Solution, which may be obtained from a veterinary hospital.

When setting up to breed, introduce conditioning and rearing foods, such as conditioning mashes, or offer hard-boiled egg mashed with whole-wheat bread and grated carrot (remove and renew several times per day to eliminate bacterial growth), or a corn-rice-bean mix you can cook yourself. Increase the amount of soft food as chicks grow. By continuing to offer a variety of food while weaning, young budgies will form good eating habits into adulthood.

To learn more about raising budgies, I recommend obtaining *Budgerigar Handbook* by Ernest H. Hart and other books by authors who raise budgies. You may also learn a great deal by joining the American Budgerigar Society.