

## Cockatiel Eggs and Breeding

Q: My pair of cockatiels keeps laying eggs but nothing's hatching. What's going on?

Linda S. Rubin explains:

Cockatiels require several fundamental conditions in order to reproduce successfully. It's likely that your birds are missing something that they need, such as extra daylight hours, a comfortable ambient temperature, satisfactory humidity levels, dietary supplementation, an appropriate nesting site and a suitable mate.

Breeding birds need additional protein, fat and other nutrients in order to be in healthy breeding shape and to feed their chicks. In addition to seeds and pellets, provide a daily supplement of eggfood (mashed hard-boiled or scrambled) or a corn/rice/bean mix lightly dusted with a quality avian multivitamin/mineral supplement containing vitamin D3. Offer plenty of fresh, dark green leafy vegetables – cockatiels love juicy stalks – and loads of carrots, which are high in vitamin A. Also give them whole-wheat bread and other nutritious commercial nesting foods. All cockatiels, especially breeding pairs, require added dietary calcium and should always have access to fresh cuttlebone. Many also enjoy mineral block, oyster shell, and chicken eggshells dried and roasted at 350 degrees for a minimum of twenty minutes to remove salmonella bacteria.

Have you offered your birds a cockatiel nesting box and an undisturbed environment in which to breed? Breeding pairs also need access to a daily bath, so they can return to the nest, dripping wet, to sit their eggs. This added moisture allows the parents to control the humidity levels necessary for chicks to rotate inside the egg, avoiding adhering to the egg membrane, so they may successfully hatch.

Cockatiels lay eggs approximately every other day; the average clutch size is four to six eggs. Candle the eggs to check for fertility.

Are you sure that you've paired a female and a male together? Did you DNA-sexing or did you guess? Most cockatiel color mutations are sexually dimorphic, showing some variations between males and females, with the exception of lutinos, white-faced lutinos and pied mutations. You can also look for behavior clues to determine gender. Check for the following clues. If both of your cockatiels act "broody" and rather quiet, laying an abundance or double the amount of eggs expected within a short period of time – that are always infertile – and neither bird is actively singing and courting the other – you might have two females.