

What Does The Info On The Leg Band Mean?

Can the hatch date be determined from the information on the leg band?

Q: I purchased a baby cockatiel from a pet store and it has a band on its leg. My understanding is that the breeder puts this on as an identifying mark. It states "FL 164 GC." I have asked the pet store, our veterinarian and have researched online. The only thing I can figure out is that he was probably hatched in Florida. I would like to find out the date he was hatched. Can you give me any suggestions as to where to go to get this information?

Sandee Molenda explains:

You are correct that a leg band is used for identification by the breeder. There is no uniform standard for what information a breeder places on the band unless that band was purchased from a member of a bird society, such as the International Parrotlet Society. However, most breeders do include the state on the band, as well as the year the chick was hatched, an identification number and the initials of the breeder or aviary where the chick was hatched. If the band was issued by a society, it would have the initials of the issuing society, such as IPS (International Parrot Society), NCS (National Cockatiel Society) or AFA (American Federation of Aviculture).

The band information you provided indicates the bird was hatched in Florida, the breeder identified it as No. 164 in order to keep records, and the breeder's or aviary's initials are "GC." Unfortunately, the year is not included, so you cannot determine your bird's age by checking the band.

If the band had been issued by a bird society, you would be able to contact that society, and it would be able to "trace" the band back to the original breeder. Most societies then contact the breeder and ask them to contact the owner. There is usually no charge for this service.

If the band is not issued by a society, as in this case, you might be able to trace the breeder's initials through some of the online band registration websites. However, they are voluntary and not everyone uses them.

Band manufacturers might be able to trace a band. However, unlike societies, which generally only allow one breeder to use a specific code, there might be multiple breeders with those initials. Also, most band manufacturers charge a fee for this service, and there are no guarantees they will be able to locate the breeder.