

An Introduction To Type Canaries

Learn about one of the major group of canaries: the type canary.

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When I was young, I remember one of my favorite places to visit was my grandmother's house. Not only did she spoil me rotten, she had a little yellow canary that I adored. At the time, I had no idea there were other kinds of canaries – I thought all canaries were yellow and sang. In fact, canaries are typically broken down into three major groups – “singing,” “color-bred” and “type.” Of all of these groups, type canaries are, in my opinion, some of the most interesting and unique. They are definitely a long way from that first canary I met at my grandmother's house.

Courtesy Crystal M. Apilado

This fife fancy canary won a top bench award at the 2007 National Cage Bird Show in Denver, Colorado.

The word “type” refers to the body structure of the canary. Type canaries vary in terms of size, shape and feather structure. They can be tiny like the Fife canary or Hartz canary or large and robust such as the Border canary or Yorkshire canary. Most of these birds are bred for show and exhibition. However, they also make beautiful pet birds.

Meet The Type Canaries

Border or border fancy canaries originated in Great Britain near the border of Scotland and England, hence the name. Borders are big, bold canaries that are very popular. Size is 5 inches from the top of the head to the tip of the tail.

The Columbus fancy, America's contribution to the world of type canaries, was developed from the Norwich and German-crested Hartz roller canaries. It is one of the more rare types of canaries, but you can always count on seeing it at the National Cage Bird Show.

Breeders that wanted the Border type canary in a smaller size, developed the fife fancy canary. Fifes are miniature replicas of Borders and popular as well.

There are two types of Gloster canaries; the crested or corona and the non-crested or consort. The Gloster is a compact, well-proportioned canary that, like the fife, is very diminutive in size.

The Hartz canary is descended from the Hartz Mountain roller canary. To many people, the Hartz looks like your average pet-store canary, although a specific exhibition standard has been developed.

The Norwich plainhead is a large, bulky canary that is 6 1/4-inches long.

The Stafford canary can either be crested or non-crested and is sometimes colorbred, but it is classified as a type canary. The Stafford canary is a small bird – about 5 inches from head to tail.

Yorkshire canaries, developed in England, are one of the oldest types. The Yorkshire is often referred to as the “Guardman” due to its tall, elongated stance that gives the impression of fearlessness.

This simply brushes the surface of a large and interesting group of canaries. Other type canaries include: Australian plainhead Bernese canary German-crested canary Irish fancy Japanese Hosozaki canaries Munich canary Raza Espanola

There are also the Frill canaries listed below. The term “frill” refers to the frilly, upturned feathers that grow up and away from the bird's body. These include: Belgian fancy Fiorino frill – crested & non-crested Giboso Espanol Gibber Italicus frill Lancashire canary Milano frill Northern Dutch frill Padovan frill – crested & non-crested Parisian frill Scots fancy Southern frill Swiss frill

Exhibiting Type Canaries

One of the most fascinating and interesting aspects of aviculture is exhibition of birds. As with dogs, cats and horses, there are many people that take the exhibition of birds, particularly canaries, to incredible heights of stature and accomplishment. None are more motivated to be those standards than exhibitors of type canaries. These people spend years, if not decades, developing exquisite bloodlines of phenomenal birds in the quest to reach the perfect standard for their type canary.

The Stafford Canary, for example, must be 5 inches in length from head to tail. The body should be robust with a well-rounded breast and broad back. The tail is short and closely packed with the wings compact and set close to the body. The stance on the perch should be at a 45-degree angle.

The Fife Fancy, another small canary, should be no larger than 4 1/2 inches with a small round head and eyes near the center that are dark and bright. The back should be well-filled and nicely rounded but not heavy. Wings should be compact and carried close to the body. The tail, too, should be close packed and narrow, nicely rounded and filled in at root. They should stand semi-erect at about a 60-degree angle. A perfect show bird is alert and jaunty, moving confidently between perches.

The most frequently recognized canary, the Hartz, also has a Standard. The body size cannot be less than 4 3/4 inches but not larger than 5 1/4 inches with the ideal size at exactly 5 inches. The body should be slightly rounded with a racy look – slim. The wings should meet in center, not cross, and lie close to body. The tail should be straight and proportioned. This bird should stand at 45-degree angle and be fearless and quick.

The Border canary, a larger version of the Fife, has a back that is well-filled and nicely rounded, running in almost a straight line. The chest is also nicely rounded, but neither heavy nor prominent. The wings should be compact, just meeting at the tips, covering the rump and back with downward pressure giving an “all in one” appearance. The tail is nicely packed and narrow. As with the Fife, the border should stand semi-erect at a 60-degree angle with a proud, free carriage of the head.