



## **PREPARING BIRDS FOR SHOW**

**By: Ron Castaner (USA)**



*Now is a good time to take a good look at the birds and select which bird (or birds) you might want to consider entering the show. Look at the size, color, feathers, and disposition of the bird. Check their feet for any missing toes or toe nails, put these aside they will not be show quality. Make sure they stand up correctly, high and proud of themselves. Start cleaning their feet with ivermectin, file their beaks if necessary and make sure to bathe them at least twice a week, early in the morning. The diet should be varied, but not too rich in soft foods. Otherwise, the birds may become obese and lethargic.*

*Selected birds are caged separately in order to eliminate the risk of damaged feathers or other possible injuries. You will have to examine the birds daily to see if they are still of show quality. Anything can happen, and probably will. That is why it is best to select several of the same kinds, so you can put back any that should suddenly lose a feather, or a toe nail, etc. Using a small spray bottle with an adjustable nozzle, (the ones used to mist house plants are great), add distilled water and spray the birds. Make sure to remove all food containers before spraying. Also, make sure cage is clean, to avoid the risk of the bird soiling its' plumage. The best time to spray them is the late morning so they have plenty of time to dry off before roosting for the night. As the birds come into show condition spraying is reduced to a fine mist, which is just enough to dampen the feathers. Two days before the show stop misting altogether allowing the feathers to tighten up and the natural oil to build up, adding a sheen and better look of conditioning.*

*The preparation cage should be relatively small with two perches. Position one on top and one near the cage floor. I use a regular breeding cage, and this seems to work well for me. As the show date gets closer the perches are placed at the same level so the birds become use to the configuration of the show cages.*

*Normally the show cage for the small finches' measures fifteen and a half inches long by twelve and a half inches high by seven and a half deep. Bar spacing between front wires is half an inch. For the larger birds in the finch category the cage would of course be larger say for example the Pekin Robin.*

*Show cage training should start early by ' hanging show cages in front of the preparation cage door and providing treats and greens inside the show cage. This will encourage the birds to enter and they will soon learn that there is always something special inside the show cage. This method not only has the advantage of making the bird feel at home, but the main idea is the bird can come in and out of the show cage without being caught. This will prevent the risk of damaging feathers or other injury to the bird.*



***One of Ron's Pekin Robins***

*The bird should spend the day before the show in their show cage. They should be moved around the bird room to simulate the movement and the handling that occurs during the show. Also, do not be afraid to go in and out of the bird room. Create traffic and noise so they can get use to people, noise and any other Activity. Breeders quickly realize that exhibiting birds requires more than just taking birds from an aviary or stock cage and put them in a show .To get the best results out of their birds, they must have some training, as to how to behave in show cages. Exhibiting is another aspect of aviculture that helps the breeder improve the standard of the stock, and promote healthy spirit of competition among members of local and nationwide dubs.*

*The cages must be spotless, the exterior, including the wire fronts is painted with a glossy black, and these should shine. The interior is painted with white vinyl silk emulsion and should also have a shine to them. There should not be any spots or dirt anywhere. The perches are cleaned with sand paper and made sure they fit tight. No wobbly perches, this makes the bird nervous and he will not perch comfortably. Be sure there are not any water containers inside the cage. Use only external water tubes, glass or plastic. The last thing you want is to have a bird all wet from bathing in the middle of the competition. Also, and I cannot emphasize this enough,*

***DO NOT USE COLORED SEED IN THE SHOW CAGES. USE PLAIN SEED!!!** All it takes is for one colored seed to turn a light colored bird red or green and it could lower its' chance in the competition. Seed containers are not normally used as they would tend to slide around when being carried to and from the judging stand. Generally, what everyone does is put a layer of seed on the floor of the show cage. I have found that **by** putting a piece of paper towel on the bottom folded to fit and not noticeable then place the seed on top. It is much easier to clean afterwards. Just be sure to use the plain seed.*

*It's time to load up for the show. Be sure to remove the water tubes just till you get to the show. I personally use storage boxes and put five or six cages to a box. I have seen a lot of other folks use the same method and it is a lot easier than carrying individually. This also keeps them free from draft, easier to carry and keeps them from sudden fright. Be sure to bring extra seed, water tubes, and extra water. I bring a whole kit of things I just might need. A large and a small net. I have had birds get out in our room when transferring them to the show cages. Magnifying glasses, sand paper, tweezers, paper towel, 0 tips, first aid kit that contains surgical glue, nail clippers, liquid vitamin b-12, stop, scissors, eye medication, and last but not least a pen and pencil. You do not have to bring all of this, but you would be surprised how many times I have saved someone else's bird or even my own. Accidents will happen, so be prepared.*

## **WHAT ARE THE JUDGES LOOKING FOR?**

*The judges will be looking for size, shape, and color, also the general condition plays a part as well as perfect, fully developed plumage. Damaged or missing feathers are considered faults, also a sign of an incomplete molt, no matter how small they are.*

*Birds must perch in a confident and proud manner. They must also give every impression of being lively and active without fluttering nervously around the cage. Pairs must be chosen so that they compliment each other and must be of the same variety. Make sure the bands of all show birds are sparkling clean.*

### ***THE NIGHT BEFORE THE SHOW:***

*I like to get everything set up the night before the show. Usually there is a room set up so you can pay for the bird registration and get the tags for the cages plus all of the paper work. The paper work is not very bad; it just depends on the number of birds you intend to show. I bring a book of reference on the finches so I have the correct spelling etc. Each bird goes into a category. You are given a booklet of the categories and you just look up your bird and fill in the blanks. Fill out the tag that is pre numbered with tag numbers. Fill out the type of bird in the cage you are working with, put your name on the bottom of the tag and tie it to the cage. Your name will be concealed so the judges and the galley have no idea whose bird they are looking at. By doing all the paper work the night before the show saves time for everyone and also gives more time for someone who needs help. If there is a question on a bird species or anything else, there are always other club members you can ask.*

### ***THE DAY OF THE SHOW:***

*When you arrive at the show you unload your birds and line them up on a table, return the water bottles to the cages, check over the birds one last time. Any broken feathers, all feathers in place, any seed stuck where it should not? Okay, now the stewards (the handlers for the judge) look over your paper work and make sure the cages and birds match up, and they are correctly labeled. Making sure, for instance, what you called a shafttail is just that and not a parson and so on. If everything is correct, you will be given the copy of the form that is usually yellow. Be sure to hold on to this copy. It will be the only way for you to claim and pick up your birds at the end of the show. After they are all checked in (this procedure is repeated for everyone) , the judge takes what is called and over view just to see that each bird is in the right category. After that is completed the show and the judging begins. Hopefully, at the end of the show, all your hard work will have paid off and you will have BEST IN SHOW. But if not, please do not be discouraged. There are other awards equally as important. But best of all, we all love getting together and seeing our friends who in some way have become an extended part of our families. We all come away with a good feeling of accomplishment, and perhaps learning something that can help us in our future shows. You always come away with new friends and a good time is had by one and all. The best of luck to every one. Please do not be afraid to show your birds. Come be involved with your other club members.*



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