

# The Border Convention

<http://www.borderconvention.org.uk>

**(The governing Body of Border Specialists Clubs throughout the UK & Europe)**

**Visit their site, there are many more great articles. Doesn't matter what the bird is, it applies to all breeds.**

## Conditioning for Breeding

### Warning

With the bad breeding results in 2018 a lot of breeders are now seeking and demanding a fool proof conditioning program for their birds. However before embarking on a new program breeders should look carefully at their own circumstances and how much time and commitment they themselves can commit to the hobby.

The number of truly successful breeders the Fancy at any one time can be numbered on the fingers of one hand and their success can be put down to one thing Dedication, and in most cases a dedication to succeed bordering on the obsessive.

They say Genius is 1% inspiration 99% perspiration this is the same for bird breeders the ones who work the hardest at the hobby become the more successful hobbyists

Where you have livestock you have deadstock is a phrase often quoted, whilst this is inevitably true, the dedicated stockman does everything he can to adapt his system to reduce mortality to a minimum.

Cleanliness is next to Godliness, if you want to be at the top of the game breeding birds especially when you are selectively breeding ( linebreeding, inbreeding ) who often have a weakened immune system reducing the number of harmful bacteria your birds are subjected to is paramount.

The biggest risk of infection come from its own feces and that of other birds.

The second biggest risk is the water supply and the containers it comes in.

The third biggest risk is soft food by its very name it has a high percentage of water 30 - 40% This added to higher temperatures during summer will soon develop molds and bacterial cultures.

Seed providing it is purchased from a reliable source and stored in a dry vermin proof environment is of minimal risk to your birds. Stockmanship is all about being proactive rather than reactive in other words you observe your birds looking for small signs of abnormal behavior and address these issues before you have a problem, rather than waiting until a problem occurs and looking for a solution.

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Whilst we try to treat our stud on a flock basis the birds are still individuals and occasionally some need slightly different conditions or treatment to the rest of the flock.

Time available is often the main limiting factor to the successful breeding of a stud of birds, if too many birds are kept the routine chores can account for most of the time available cutting down the time to observe (and enjoy) your birds. This can result in the law of diminishing returns i.e.: the more you keep the less chicks you breed.

Observation doesn't just apply to looking at your birds it applies to looking at everything in the environment you provide for your bird. The main of these are light, temperature, humidity, food, water and disturbance. In this respect no two fanciers will have the same environment therefore one breeding program will not fit all.

Therefore before just adopting another management plan, sit down and critically examine what you did in 2018, and look at what did not work and list how you failed your birds.

Unless you are super critical of your own system, and ready to admit your failings, adopting another fancier's successful system will not succeed unless he looks after your birds for you.

### **Ronald Sillitoe's System**

In the following article is what works for me personally and my average number of chicks over the last 10 years has been 4 per hen

Over the past 20 years the seasons as we used to know them have changed to the point where we can have as nice a day at Christmas as in August, we can have snow at the end of spring, damp summers or as in 2018 a dry summer meaning we have no idea what weather will be from one week to the next. It is now only the length of daylight that determines our bird's world.

With most breeders having light in the bird rooms we can now confuse them even more by having the lights on to suit our needs rather than theirs.

Therefore to breed the modern day Border a higher level of commitment is required.

This begins with creating the seasons for them

You must consider lighting, heating, humidity, ventilation, cage floor covering, diet, water products and perches which all together will result in the improved welfare of your stock.

You must also consider how much time you can commit and how to manage that time wisely.

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Canaries thrive in a dry well ventilated environment and this is our aim by using a dehumidifier to keep the level of moisture in the air down to 70% any higher and bacteria and fungi starts to grow which will affect our stock especially during the breeding season it is also very important to try to keep the humidity up to 70 % as any lower can make the membrane in the egg shrink and limit the chicks ability to hatch, any higher and bacteria can enter through the porous egg shell and when the chick breaks into the air pocket the bacteria can kill it causing dead in shell. Keeping the humidity at 70% can be achieved by a humidifier or by hanging wet towels up or wetting the floor with water and leaving buckets of water (covered with mesh) around the bird room.

Humidistats to check the moisture level can be purchased for a modest outlay, a number of these should be used placed around the bird room at different heights to give a true overall picture of the humidity level

The next most important thing is air flow. I have air vents at low level and a fan also blowing in at low level, an extractor fan is also fitted at roof height on a timer coming on 15 minutes per hour rising to 30 minutes per hour during breeding. The low level fan is thermostatically controlled coming on at 20 degrees. I also have a inner mesh door so I can leave the main door open all the time I only close it during heavy rain . Keeping a steady airflow makes the bird room fresh and the birds healthy

I only use heating in preparation to breed and during the breeding season using 3 tubular heaters set on a thermostat to 16 degrees this makes it comfortable for the birds. (However due to personal circumstances I start breeding earlier in the year than many other fanciers)

Cage floor covering is sawdust as this absorbs moisture better than some other coverings in my opinion.

My seed is countrywide champion breeder which I have used for a number of years

Perches are important, as bad ones can make the birds get corns and loose ones can make treading fail, I prefer twist on wood perches which I smooth with sandpaper to create an oval type perch.

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## Ronnie Sillitoe's Pre Breeding Conditioning Programme

Essential before starting your conditioning programme you have to decide the date you want to start breeding, this will vary for every fancier depending on their personal circumstances as regards to work and family commitments.

Below is a table which should cover the dates when most will be contemplating the start of their breeding season

Start Conditioning	To Start Breeding
31 <sup>st</sup> December	25 <sup>th</sup> February
7 <sup>th</sup> January	4 <sup>th</sup> March
14 <sup>th</sup> January	11 <sup>th</sup> March
21 <sup>st</sup> January	18 <sup>th</sup> March
28 <sup>th</sup> January	25 <sup>th</sup> March
4 <sup>th</sup> February	1 <sup>st</sup> April
11 <sup>th</sup> February	8 <sup>th</sup> April
18 <sup>th</sup> February	15 <sup>th</sup> April

## Lighting Programme

Set Lights To 10 Hours **At Start Date**

Week One Increase To **10 ½** Hours

Week Two Increase To **11** Hours

Week Three Increase To **11 ½** Hours

Week Four Increase To **12** Hours

Week Five Increase To **12 ½** Hours

Week Six Increase To **13** Hours

Week Seven Increase To **13 ½** Hours

If Cocks Or Hens Are Not In The Same Condition ie: Hens Not Showing As Much Interest Or Cocks Not Singing Full Song Stop At **13** Hours Till They Catch Up

Then Increase To **14** Hours

With The Fade Up And Dim Down You Should Have **14½** Hours Which You Must **Not** Exceed

## **CANARY CONDITIONING PROGRAMME**

**At Start of Conditioning Set Lights To 10hrs**

**Move Lights 30mins A Week until Reaching a Maximum of 14hrs**

**Weeks 1 -4 Feed as the table below**

	Water	Cocks	Hens
Monday	Omnivit	Condition Seed	Softfood
Tuesday	Omnivit	Softfood Charcoal	Softfood Charcoal
Wednesday	Prolyte	Greens	Greens
Thursday	Prolyte	Condition Seed	Condition Seed
Friday	Fertivit	Condition Seed	Softfood
Saturday	Fertivit	Greens Charcoal	Greens Charcoal
Sunday	Freshwater	Condition Seed	Condition Seed

**Charcoal Amount Is One Level Teaspoon Each**

**Condition seed Amount Is One Level Teaspoon Each**

**Soft food Amount Is One Level Teaspoon Each**

**Greens Amount Is One Level Teaspoon Each**

**Stop Programme When Hens Are Flitting Wings**

**Or Cocks Dancing On Perches**

**For Weeks 5-8 feed as the table below**

	Water	Cocks	Hens
Monday	Fertivit	Condition Seed	Softfood
Tuesday	Fertivit	Softfood Charcoal	Softfood Charcoal
Wednesday	Prolyte	Greens	Greens
Thursday	Prolyte	Condition Seed	Condition Seed
Friday	Fertivit	Condition Seed	Softfood
Saturday	Fertivit	Greens Charcoal	Greens Charcoal
Sunday	Freshwater	Condition Seed	Condition Seed

**Any Fanciers who may have queries please e-mail the Editor.**

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## Breeding Season Update 1

As the breeding season approaches it's time to look for problems we might encounter.

Birds carrying too much fat will get you off to a bad start so check each bird and adjust the feeding because we are giving egg food, conditioning seed and other bits and bobs as well as the seed in the hopper, some hens will put fat on and some won't so it's important to check their weight. If they are fat remove seed hopper through the day replacing one hour before lights out but continue with the conditioning program.

Keeping your cages and perches clean will stop bacteria getting a foothold, I change my perches every week as the hens scrape their beaks on them and pick up bacteria then feed the chicks.

### **Egg storage is another important thing:**

I store my eggs in millet seed as its not oily so won't transfer anything to the egg and won't absorb any moisture out of the egg.

It's also important to store eggs laid on the side, I turn each egg when the next one is laid.

Nesting material can wrap around the birds legs and cause problems, so be aware of this and cut it into short lengths.

### **My feeding program is:**

Hens incubating only get mixed seed and plain water and a teaspoon off egg food once a week.

1. Chicks one to five days old egg food only (nothing added it's a balanced mix)
2. Chicks five to seven days egg food and green food (mine is broccoli and kale, finely chopped but only small amounts)
3. Seven days to weaning egg food, green food and sprouted seed

### **Water:**

Once a week multivitamins

Once a week Prolyte C

Once a week calcium

This is given through all stages after hatching

Other day's plain water

**Ronald Sillitoe 26.03.2019**

**Note — This is what this author/breeder does and works for him. We all figure our own ways of doing things, and what products, seed, vitamins, water additives etc. Please also if more understanding is needed, go on line and investigate the named products he uses to find the equivalent ones here in the US.**

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