

LORIES AND LORIKEETS

Phil Smith keeps 15 species of lories and 4 species of lorikeets in an enclosed aviary complex which measures 22 metres by 4 metres. Construction of the aviaries consists of a tube steel framework with colourbond cladding. Clear blinds can be kept up or rolled down to keep out the wind when necessary. After starting with concrete floors, these have now been covered with ceramic tiles to overcome the effect of bird droppings. Phil made the comment that the grouting between the tiles was now reaching a stage when it would need to be replaced since it had been eaten away by bird droppings. An observation came from the audience that a grout to overcome this problem was now available. Individual enclosures measure six metres by one metre with an access walkway at the back. Given the problems with bird thefts in this day and age, Phil has both laser beams and security cameras throughout his aviary complex. All cages are suspended.

Phil's day starts early – at around 4.00am – when the lights come on in the aviaries. His birds are fed a mix of rice cereal, muesli cereal, egg/biscuit mix and dextrose which, with liquid nectar form the basis of his bird's diet. Each day Phil has to prepare 60 bowls of food which includes apples, peas and corn with a small quantity (25mm square) of vanilla cake. Calcium is added to the dry food. For the foreign birds, peppers and capsicums are added. The bowls are placed inside a structure inside the cage which prevents them from being tipped over. Ti-tree perches are provided in each aviary.

Because lories are very susceptible to disease, it is essential that all aviaries are kept very clean. Phil's complex is hosed out each day. Each cage is suspended on a track fixed near the roof of the complex. This enables any individual cage to be dropped down from the track and shifted anywhere else in the complex without the need to catch up the birds. The watering system is semi-automatic, only needing to have a hose plugged in to water the birds each day. The system is capable of filling 20 bowls in a minute. Water bowls are scrubbed out each month.

Nest boxes measure 200mm by 250mm and are fitted within the cage but with access from outside. Lories lay two eggs which incubate in about 24 days. To begin with, sawdust is placed in each of the nest boxes. Once the chicks are 2-3 days old the sawdust is replaced with wood shavings which soak up the moisture better. Chicks are inspected each day. All birds are close rung and DNA or surgically sexed. When necessary, birds are hand reared using an IC unit as a brooder with a hospital box available as a back up. Virben is used as a disinfectant and Nilstart as a probiotic in this

situation. Phil prefers to spoon feed birds and uses a thermometer to test the temperature of the food before feeding. The weaning process is carried out in a separate nursery where the young are fed the food they will get once placed in the aviary. Again, when necessary, Phil prefers to foster eggs out rather than incubate and this seems to work OK but losses are to be expected.

Lories need things in the aviary to keep them occupied – swings, chains, chunky fruit and a big bowl for swimming seem to fill the bill.

In conclusion, Phil finds lories to be friendly birds that will interact with you, if allowed.

Based on a talk given by Phil Smith at the UBSSA Seminar held at the Enfield Community Centre on Sunday May 30th 2004.