

## Lucky Choice 2

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To breed, or not to breed?

In a previous article '**Lucky Choice**', I outlined my success with a pair of Canaries at breeding time and the advantages of using plastic 'dummy' canary eggs. This was to ensure that all the young hatch on the same day, to get them all off to a good even start in life.

This was about to be my third season with this particular hen and as much as I enjoy breeding canaries, this particular season probably wasn't going to unfold. This was due to the fact that my family and I were busy preparing our house for sale during the start of the breeding season. Our house sold quickly and we moved into our new residence about six weeks later at the end of October. Apart from the extra time required ensuring that the breeding birds were being offered extra foodstuffs during the rearing period. I didn't want to have to destroy eggs or attempt to move birds on the nest with young. This wasn't an option, as prior to the move one of our aviaries had to be dismantled, so birds were juggled around to accommodate this. And after the move the same aviary was to be used for poultry for an indefinite period of time, so the birds would have to stay put for the interim. Unpacking my family and settling in various poultry and aviary birds was the highest priority. The particular pair of canaries



concerned in the '*Lucky Choice*' article were moved from a small patio style aviary that they had to themselves to a modest all wire bird cage measuring 600mm x 430mm x 400mm, only this time they had to share it with a tame cockatiel. My other two pairs of canaries were being housed in the patio aviary mentioned earlier, were obviously wanting to breed

as I was starting to notice that their newspaper lining was starting to get shredded on a daily basis.

It was at the beginning of December that I decided to see what would happen this late in the season by placing nesting pans in with the two groups of canaries (3 pairs). Within a week a nest was completed and eggs laid by one hen. My *Lucky Choice* hen in the small cage wasn't showing any interest with her nesting material, although she was seen sitting in her nest pan. Seeing how I didn't have a lot of space to play with in the bird cage and the pair had a Cockatiel sharing the cage, I placed the nest pan as high as possible in one corner to allow the canaries some extra privacy.

To my Surprise!

The hen in the small cage eventually built a nest and I awaited the first egg for replacement with a dummy egg. The thing that was different for her this time, apart from now living in a smaller cage, was that every day the cage was brought inside and taken outside from the house. This was approximately a distance of eight metres. The first egg finally appeared and was promptly replaced with a dummy egg. I can't recall if she continued to sit that first night after her move inside the house or not.

The hen produced three eggs over three consecutive days. I wondered if something was wrong when no more eggs appeared, as she has previously produced either a four or a five egg clutch. When she hadn't produced any more eggs by the afternoon of day five, I decided to return her three eggs to her. She didn't incubate that night, however promptly got back onto her nest the following morning. That night after incubating all day outside, she left the nest unattended overnight after her move inside the house. This happened again the following night, so I wondered what would be the end result? By day fourteen nothing had hatched, however all three eggs looked fertile, as the cage situation gave me an ideal opportunity to view the eggs whilst the hen was off the nest. On the morning of day sixteen I found three healthy looking chicks had hatched. I believe that they may have hatched two days late due to the hen not incubating 'tight' within the first couple of days.

My next challenge was to be able to give the parents their 'Canary Starter' mix, hard boiled egg and various greens daily, without the Cockatiel eating it all before the canaries had a chance to feed. Two containers were introduced for the canary starter and the boiled egg to ensure that 'Tuta' the cockatiel couldn't be in two places at once! The canaries once again proved to be excellent parents unperturbed by their 'new' breeding cage and the three chicks grew quickly.

The one thing that I had hesitated about breeding so late in the season was the approaching hot weather. Luckily the weather was kind for the incubating and rearing period, with only one hot day when the temperature was just over 40 degrees. This was when the chicks were fourteen days old. When I returned from work I found that one chick had fledged and the other two were hanging over the side of their nest pan, not panting, but obviously hot.

My wife had put wet towels on the outside of the cage to help cool it down during the day, although on reflection they probably could have benefited being brought inside the house - as they were well and truly accustomed to

this practice twice daily! Later that afternoon, when it was cooler I attempted to return the fledged chick to its nest. However 'he' had other ideas and this prompted the other two to fledge also. I consider 14 days to be slightly premature, as I usually find that young fledge at about 17-18 days. The cock bird was showing his annoyance with ruffled feathers, brought on by the chirping of his brood as they fluttered around the cage. The following morning all three chicks were perching well. 'Tuta' didn't appear to care that her cage had now well and truly been taken over by canaries!

Good result...considering I was not going to let the hen commence another clutch, as I considered that I was fortunate enough to produce three healthy chicks as it was. And probably a wise decision, as my young had fledged two weeks prior to the Adelaide heat wave occurring in late January. Not to mention children playing around the house right next to their cage.

And what of the other two pairs in the small patio aviary that didn't get moved around twice a day? One pair hatched five young and lost four at an early age, fledging one. And the other (a first season hen that I bred the season before), only produced the one egg, which unfortunately was dead in the shell upon hatching. All nest pans were removed after this.

### Precautions

The only precautions I made during the 'cage breeding' exercise, was to ensure that the cage was placed in the same position morning and night. And that the roof and side directly over where the hen was incubating was well covered for privacy. This was especially important of a night when house lighting and noise may have disturbed her.

Products mentioned in text:

*Canary Starter*: A complete soft food for canaries  
Superior product to egg and biscuit mixes  
Manufactured by:  
**Passwell Pty Ltd**  
8 Oborn Road  
Mt Barker SA 5251