



## ***THE EXPERT REPLIES***

The following query was received from Kirsty:

*I recently purchased a pair of Eastern Rosellas, the hen has laid and is now on four eggs but until the fourth one was laid she did not incubate the eggs at all during the night in fact she was in the aviary away from the box with the cock where she has always slept. She was in the box most of the day from when she started laying but given the size and "Z" shape of the box I have no idea whether she was actually sitting on the eggs or sitting further up in the box guarding them. I am wondering if it is normal for a hen not to incubate until she's finished laying?*

The query was passed to an experienced Eastern Rosella breeder, who replied as follows:

*Eastern Rosella hens would normally commence incubating their eggs full time as soon as the second egg is laid, although some may start with the first egg. Only the hen incubates the eggs.*

*Hens cannot tell if their eggs are fertile or not until such time as the eggs fail to hatch at which time the hen usually destroys the eggs and will then often commence laying again.*

*As you do not know the history of your birds it is hard to say if this is new or established behaviour by your hen.*

*It may be that the hen is not all that happy with the Z nest box and it has taken four eggs before she would settle down full time.*

*If she does not fully incubate the eggs or if you have similar problems with the next round, something you could try would be to provide a selection of nest boxes and logs.*

*It is usual practice to provide first time (or new purchases) Rosellas with a selection of nests and let them select the one they like. Once they have settled into a log or box they will usually always use that one and you can then remove the others.*

*As well as keeping the Z box, I would suggest also providing a log and a vertical box with both being no more than 170-200mm across the bottom.*

*Something else to consider is the possibility that something is disturbing the hen at night.*

*Failing all that and if you do not end up with some chicks but would like some, then you may have to consider changing the cock. It is quite normal behaviour for a Rosella cock to chase a hen into a nest box and keep her there. If your cock is allowing the hen out of the box overnight then he is not doing his job and he could be the problem.*