

INSTALLATION OF A MICRO-SPRAYING SYSTEM

By Dan Hassell

I recently finished one of those jobs that you always intend to do, but never seem to find the time, the installation of a mist spraying system above the flights of my aviaries. With the onset of summer, anything that will help alleviate heat-stress on aviary birds is a great asset and, with the availability of garden irrigation systems these days, it is an easy and relatively inexpensive task. With the introduction of water restrictions during summer in recent years the United Bird Societies of SA got a ruling to enable aviculturalists to use mist sprayers for the welfare of their birds.

All my aviaries have a tap installed on the inside, to make changing of drinking water easier, and there is an external water tap at one end of the aviary block. I fitted a Pope™ electronic timer to that tap - cost \$69-00, but there are cheaper versions on the market that will do the same job. The reason I chose that particular one is that it has a removable, 'clip-on' electronic module that can be programmed for up to 6 operations per day. It also does not need 240 volt power : it is controlled by 3 AA batteries. I programmed my unit to operate 7 days a week (it can be programmed differently) and 6 times each day, at 2 hourly intervals between 10-00 am and 8-00 pm, for 10 mins each operation. Watching the sprayers when the system operates for the first time, the amount the tap needs to be turned on can be adjusted, after which it is just left alone.

From the timer-tap I ran one length of 13 mm irrigation tubing up the side of the aviaries, then across the top the flight areas, attaching it to the wire-mesh with plastic cable ties. A word of warning here, if you have large parrots that chew, you will need to elevate the tubing 100 mm or so above the wire-mesh otherwise they will demolish it in quick time, and potentially swallow the plastic also. At the other end of the length of tubing I installed a valve that I can open so that I can flush out the system from time to time. It is then just a matter of screwing the micro-sprayers in at regular intervals, while making sure they are not positioned where they will dampen the dry-seed receptacles.

I have noticed that many of the birds get quite excited each time the sprayers activate, particularly some of the finches and the Hooded and Golden Shouldered Parrots. These 'Anthill' cockbirds begin whistling and parading to the hens. I'm hoping that this introduction of 'artificial rain' may also encourage these parrots from the tropics into nesting.

I have been trying to get plants going in my finch aviaries (with limited success due to the finches molesting them) and I hope this regular watering will also aid, not only in the survival of the plants but also to help their growth.

I would encourage anyone else who has not got around to putting in a spraying system, to find the time before the extreme heat arrives.