

SHOW PREPARATION By Jack Hackshall

On Monday 26 November 2007, Jack Hackshall gave the following talk/demonstration on show preparation, something he has kindly repeated for us many times over the year. Jack is renowned for his ability in this area.

Presentation and preparation is important for the exhibition side of the hobby. This has gone backwards in the last 5 years and appears not to be considered as important as it once was.

Preparation starts 8-10 weeks before the actual show.

The first step is ensuring that the birds are free of internal and external parasites (worms, feather mite, lice). Fido's is good to use as it has a wetting agent.

Spray the birds with warm water from a spray bottle, thoroughly soak the birds the first time. You can add 1/3 teaspoon of glycerine into boiling water and spray this on the birds to make the feathers look good. If you do this you must add the glycerine to boiling water otherwise the birds will end up covered in long white strings of glycerine! If you hold the spray bottle about 3 feet or 1 metre from the birds, by the time the water comes out of the spray bottle in a fine mist, it is not too hot.

Lightly spray the birds every second day until 4 days before the show. You can add 3 – 4 drops of Dettol to the water.

If you spray the birds with ice cold water out of the fridge it helps birds with heavy feather and heavy down, *but only if they are used to it*. Do this the day before the show to help the buffy feather lay down nice and smooth.

Check the flight and tail feathers and remove any broken feathers. Don't pull out both tail feathers at the same time in case they don't both grow back. Pull one tail feather and when you can see a new tail feather growing and healthy, then pull the second one. You can show a bird with one tail feather but not with none.

Make sure your birds are used to being in holding cages – some won't eat in a holding cage if they aren't used to it.

Check the length of the toe nails. If toe nails are too long, the bird may not be able to grip the perch properly in the show cage. You can take the tip off the toe nail with a nail file.

Dressing the mask – only pull one feather out at a time. You can use tweezers, there are a lot of different ones on the market. You can clip the mask with nail clippers but this takes a lot of practice and is very hard. The advantage is that the spot doesn't grow back until the cut feather actually falls out, so this is a good way if you want to keep showing the bird over a period of time. You get a lot of spots near the cheek patch, just leave one spot under the cheek patch. Don't pull out all the underspots otherwise the feathers won't sit right, they will stick out. Try and take out the black striations above the eye if you can. It makes it look as if the cap goes back further.

Wash the cap of white capped birds with baby shampoo (No More Tears). Rinse the shampoo out and sprinkle Johnsons Baby Powder onto the cap. The next morning blow the powder off and the cap will be lovely and white.

Some birds may need to be shampooed (eg albinos). Use No More Tears shampoo. The poultry people use Martha Gardeners Eucalyptus Wool Wash which brings the birds up really well.

Straighten flights and tail feathers on the morning of the show with either steam or boiling water. Put boiling water in a cup. Hold the bird so that your thumb sits at the base of his tail and dip the feather into the boiling water. This doesn't hurt the bird, and by holding your thumb at the base of the tail you will burn yourself before you burn the bird.

On the morning of the show you can use this technique to make the head of a bird appear wider. Dip your finger in some baby oil and rub it into the back of your hand. Lick your finger, wipe this finger across the baby oil on your hand and using this finger rub the feather above the eye outwards over the eye, bringing the feather out over the eye. This creates the illusion of a wider head and lasts for several hours.

Good preparation will come back.

A bird that is well prepared and in good feather will always beat a bird in poor condition.

If you fail to prepare, you prepare to fail.
