

## Breeding Birds—Bengalese



This fact sheet gives guidance on breeding Bengalese Finches.

## Frequently Asked Questions

- 1 *What is a Bengalese Finch and where does it come from ?*  
The Bengalese Finch is a seedeating Finch and is not found wild anywhere in the world. It is believed to have been created in China many years ago.
- 2 *What is its basic diet ?*  
Mixed Millet, Fine Grit and Water.
- 3 *What other seeds and foods should be provided ?*  
Canary Seed, Niger, Millet Sprays, Paddy Rice and Cuttlefish Bone.
- 4 *Is it necessary to provide softfood ?*  
Softfood may be given all year round but mainly in the breeding season as a rearing food. Canary rearing food is popular. Soaked seed and soaked oats are also acceptable.
- 5 *How should Bengalese be housed ?*  
Outside flights with dry sleeping quarters or inside flights or cages. Bengalese appear to be much happier in cages rather than open flights.
- 6 *Is the Bengalese Finch hardy and is heat required ?*  
Yes, the Bengalese Finch is hardy and will stand the coldest weather. Most fanciers do provide some sort of heat to keep the birdroom just above freezing. Light must be provided if one wishes to breed early to compensate for the long hours of darkness.
- 7 *Does the Bengalese Finch like to bathe ?*  
Yes, very much so. Fresh water should be provided daily where possible.
- 8 *What are the best perches for Bengalese Finches ?*  
Natural, twiggy perches, of varying diameter are best.
- 9 *Which is the best cage floor covering for Bengalese Finches ?*  
There are many kinds - clean sawdust, wood shavings and fine sand. Newspaper is very popular, many sheets can be placed in the cage and the top one removed every other day.
- 10 *Will Bengalese Finches breed in flights ?*  
Yes - but in order to be sure of colour and exhibition standards, most Bengalese Finches are now bred in cages.
- 11 *What size cage is suitable for breeding ?*  
24" x 16" x 12" deep is the recommended size.
- 12 *What size nest box is required ?*  
The best size nest box for Bengalese Finches is 5" x 5" x 5" with a hinged lid for inspection. The front should be made so that the birds can get in and out and have a small perch at the opening.
- 13 *What is the best nesting material and where should it be put ?*  
The nest box should be half filled with hay, soft grasses. Some nesting material should be placed in the cage for the birds to complete building the nest.
- 14 *How many eggs does a Bengalese Finch lay ?*  
The average clutch is five eggs - but they can lay as many as eight eggs.
- 15 *How long do Bengalese Finch eggs take to hatch ?*  
Normally fourteen days from the last egg laid.
- 16 *When is the best time to close ring Bengalese ?*

Between 8-10 days after hatching. It's quite easy, just place the front three toes in the ring and then gently slide the ring over the back one.

17 *When should young Bengalese Finches be taken away from their parents ?*

Between 35-40 days, if they are definitely self feeding.

18 *How old should Bengalese Finches be for breeding ?*

Cocks at least ten months, but it is better if the hens are at least twelve months.

19 *Should cocks and hens be parted when not breeding ?*

It is not necessary. You can split ring cocks for easy identification if housed in large cages, or flights.

## **General Management**

### ***HOUSING***

Housing and feeding should really be considered before you have bought your stock and adequate preparation should be made before purchase.

How do you intend to breed ? Colony or Cage ? It is probably true to say that all successful breeders control breed in cages. In this way adequate records can be kept. If you then decide to control breed, you will need cages of reasonable size, say 24" long x 15" deep x 18" high. Of course these sizes can be altered to suit your requirements but accommodation must be adequate.

For convenience when not breeding it is advisable to build the cages in runs of three or more according to accommodation. Removable partitions can be inserted between the cages and removed when breeding is over, thus providing useful flight cages. All cage doors should be big enough to take a 5" cube nest box.

If you are buying one or two pairs you will need more than one or two cages. You must make provision for the youngsters either in providing extra cages or independent flights. Don't be caught napping with a bunch of youngsters and nowhere to put them.

Heating is a matter of personal choice and the part of the country you live. In the south it is not usually necessary as long as reasonable protection is given. In the north the situation may be different and some slight warmth may be provided. 45% F should be ample.

A small light may be provided for use during the long nights of winter in order to extend the feeding period, particularly during the breeding months. Some breeders restrict the light to a certain number of hours others leave it on all night. Preferences vary from 10w to 45w.

### ***FEEDING***

Here again there are varying practices but there is no difference of opinion on the value of and the birds' preference for white millet. Mixed millets with a large portion of Panicum millet can be offered together with millet sprays in addition to White Millet. Mineralised grit, cuttlefish, dried crushed eggshells, (baked in the oven). Fine oystershell are all offered by breeders.

During the breeding season in particular, certain additives are offered PYM, Kelp, Multivitamins, etc. During the last few years Abidec added to the drinking water or included in soft food seems to have become very popular.

Soft foods offered are varied, from some proprietary brands of Foreign or canary mixtures to the home made varieties. Brown Bread and Milk is very popular. To these hard-boiled egg can be added. Whatever soft food is used it should not be wet but crumbly moist. This is important. It prevents the nest from becoming too wet and unsavoury from the droppings.

### *BREEDING*

This is the most rewarding aspect of Bengalese keeping. It can also be the most frustrating ! But don't get downhearted if you do not achieve the results you require in anyone year. Experienced breeders have their unaccountable failures sometimes. But most of the time there is reasonable success. One of the secrets is to know when your birds are ready. Bright eyes and liveliness are good indicators. Your birds may still be moulting but yet are fit for mating. Show fitness is not necessarily the same as breeding fitness. If the cocks are calling and the hens are alert, they are probably ready. If you are a breeder who fixes a certain date for putting your birds down to breed you are wasting your time if they are not in breeding condition.

Whatever soft food you have decided upon you should start to feed to your breeding pairs some weeks before mating in order that the birds get accustomed to it.

The nest box should be about 5" cubed, either with half open front or hole with removable lid. This may be hung on the outside of the cage or as most people prefer on the inside of the cage. It is preferable to inspect the nest box daily and as soon as the first egg appears a note should be made of the date for your records.

After the young appear their development should be watched carefully so that rings can be put on the birds at the right moment. To put them on too soon offers the risk of the ring slipping off and being lost. If you leave it too late, forget about ringing unless you want to run the risk of damaging the bird's leg.

Don't breed from immature birds. If you only have young birds to start with curb your enthusiasm for breeding. They will breed from a young age but remember that if they do much of the food that should go into building the bones and body goes into feeding young. When you are breeding you should be looking for "substance" in a bird more than anything else. Not necessarily size, but "substance" which is something different again.

Provide bathing water at all times. Bengalese are avid bathers, even in the depths of winter. They will keep fitter and their feathers will be in better condition. Even with persistent bathing their feet will sometimes find dirt adhering to them. Keep an eye out for any dirty feet. Wash if necessary. Do not let feet get encrusted with dirt. If you do, the feet will possibly be damaged.

This fact sheet has been produced for:  
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