

At our November meeting we had one of our most interesting meetings I have ever attended. We had guest speakers, Dr Ron Woodhead, breeder extraordinaire Henry George and the very knowledgeable Garry Menzies.

Our members were split into three groupings with our guest speakers spending 25 minutes in each group with a summation at the end. Below I have listed some of the notes I took that I found to be of interest.

Ron Woodhead:

Cysts on a budgerigar: These are formed by glands being blocked. The secretion in the bird should be liquid but sometimes it is creamy, blocks the gland and becomes infected. You can lance the cyst and give the bird antibiotics. Lumps on wings are usually follicle cysts or tumours. Cysts are not infectious nor are they hereditary.

Feather plucking: If a bird feather plucks it is a good idea to look at the diet you are supplying – the odd bird will do it for spite but generally it is diet related. It usually indicates the protein level is too low. Giving Egg & Biscuit is useless – hard boiled eggs would be better. Hi-Pro is available for only \$16 for 10 kgs and is 25% protein. Because of the weather conditions, grains are not as high in protein as they normally are so extra should be given.

Small Parrot mix is fine as long as it is not overdone as sunflower seeds have more fat and oils in them – some are helpful whilst too much is detrimental. Feeding bread to your birds is useless.

I described the soft food mix we give our birds to Ron and he told me we were giving a bit of fibre and vitamins but not protein. Our mix is bread, carrot, beetroot, silverbeet, parsley, corn & rolled oats. (Guess who is changing their soft food mix).

Cocci: Conditions to set off Coccidiosis in your aviary are prevalent at present – dry humid days with storms at night. Cocci can wipe out your aviary in two to three days – I know because we have visited that little area years ago- and yet it is easily treatable. Baycox still remains one of the best medications for this problem. Ron suggests using it in a preventative manner for 3 continuous days every month. Be sure you mix it as per the directions on the bottle. If you have an outbreak of Cocci then treatment should be for five days.

Prior to breeding season, you should treat your birds for worms, lice, mites and Cocci. It is also a good idea to treat your hens with Doxycycline for 14 days prior to breeding to rid them of any infections they may have internally.

Mites and Lice: Moxyclexin is a good treatment for mites and lice as it can be given both externally and in their drinking water. Mites can suck the blood out of the youngsters and lice can make both you and your birds extremely itchy and uncomfortable. Moxyclexin also treats tapeworm which is a bonus.

Henry George

Feather plucking: Once Henry notices signs of a hen down plucking its youngsters, he places rock salt in the floor of the breeding cage as well as a piece in the nestbox. When he has done this, feather plucking has stopped straight away.

Infertile eggs: You must ensure your hens are coming into top breeding condition and that usually happens in November when a breeder is thinking about shutting up shop. The cere colour should be a light biscuit brown and you should feel your hens for their body weight. Hens usually lose weight in the breeding cage so it is better to put a slightly overweight hen down to breed than one that is on the light side. With the cocks, the cere colour should be a blue and actively flying from perch to perch chatting away loudly. If after seven to ten days, the pair don't look that interested in each other, then Henry splits the pair up.

In his hens flights, Henry has a hollowed out log in which he puts wood shavings. When the hens start digging around in the logs and pulling out the shavings, it is usually a sign they are coming into breeding condition.

Fostering eggs: You must ensure you foster eggs at the correct time in their cycle. A little experiment next time you are in your breeding room – take an egg out of a nest box and place it on your lips to feel the warmth. Go to another nest box and repeat the process – you will feel different degrees of warmth. Some hens sit tighter than the others and some hens body temperatures are higher than others. Fostering should only be done between one or two days of laying or one to two days of hatching. If you do it midway, the different degrees of heat could kill off the chick.

During the drier weather we have been experiencing, Henry has been dampening the eggs one or two days out from hatching. As he is going around checking his nest boxes, he has a bowl of warm (not hot) water on hand. He takes out an egg that is one or two days away from hatching and places it in the warm water for about ten seconds. He then places egg next to the one laid after this egg. With the egg being porous, it soaks up a little moisture to give it a boost prior to hatching.

Henry is loathe to foster under a hen that has had a clear round unless there is an obvious reason. E.g. cock bird with a damaged wing cannot “hang on” to the hen as well during mating and therefore eggs may not be fertilised. Henry has found that if a hen lays clear eggs for no obvious reason, then usually there is something wrong inwardly and you may lose your fostered eggs.

Never throw a hen that has been breeding straight back into the flight. Give her at least one or two weeks in a holding cage. Unless the cock bird is shattered, he can go straight back into the flight. Henry waits until his hens are ten months of age to pair up unless they are bigger buffy hens when he will pair them up at seven or eight months of age. With the bigger buffier cocks, you may have to wait until they are about two years of age.

Dropped tails and flights: Gerald Binks from the United Kingdom puts one drop of Ivomec on the chicks tail at 2 to 3 days of age and again at three weeks of age. He has not experienced his birds having dropped tails or flights except during the normal moulting

process, since using this process. Dr Marshall in Sydney believes the problem is a feather quill mite which is why the Ivomec probably works.

Garry Menzies

Seed quality: Garry spoke about the severe shortage of grain around at present due to the lack of rain. Prices are going to get higher but when it does rain and grains are in good supply again the cost will drop. The big companies like Ridley, Golden Cob and Crest will survive as they have large silos of grain stored.

Lack of Protein is a problem at present and he has a Soya Bean Meal that is 36% protein but you must keep things in moderation. Do not now go mad on protein as it may have a detrimental effect as well but at present most diets supplied are low in this very important element.

Meat meal products should be included in the diets and Garry is more than happy to discuss some of the products with you.

We have a real bonus in Garry being a vital member of our club as he understands birds needs, breeders needs and has a produce agency that supplies those needs to us. He is also a wealth of knowledge and doesn't mind a chat.

Garry's store is located at 124 South Pine Road, Brendale – telephone 3881 1711. If he hasn't got a product in stock, just ask him if he can get it in but I am sure with his large range of products he will be able to meet your requirements.

Thank you gentlemen for a wonderful, entertaining and very informative meeting. Our members have requested we repeat it again next year so I hope you will accept the invitation when extended to you. We are a very lucky club to have access to such wonderful knowledgeable people.