

## *The Success Story of Bob Smith.*

Carol: *When did you start out in budgies?*

**Bob:** I first joined the hobby in 1986 but in 1990 when the first United Kingdom imports arrived I considered the prices to be far too high and left the fancy. I spent the next few years four wheel driving and once 7 vehicles went from Bryon Bay to Steep Point in Western Australia. A lot of great fun and memories where had and I often look back at the photos and reminisce.

I came back into budgies in 1999 after spending six months just looking around. I read the book "The Challenge" (my wife Betty calls it the Budgie Bible) written by Englishman Gerald Binks and everything I do now and know is because of that book. It is a fantastic read. I purchased birds from four different aviaries –those being Nigel Tonkin, Gary Gazzard, Plunkett & Tasi and a few from Ernie Wise. I wanted birds with feather and length – the Gazzard birds had the length I wanted and the Tonkin birds had the feather.

Carol: *Please describe your aviary?*

**Bob:** I had to rebuild an aviary and now the bird room measures six metres by 3 metres by 3 metres high. I have thirty-six wooden breeding cabinets which each measure 450 deep by 50cm wide by 120cm long. I also have three flights – two are 5 metres long by 2 metres wide and the other is 1.2metres wide by 2 metres deep.

Carol: *When do you put your birds down to breed and what do you feed them?*

**Bob:** I usually put my birds down for breeding in February and go through to October but next year I am changing to the end of March till October. The reason is that in February the birds visually were in condition but really they were down in body weight especially the hens. I feel the extra month will give them time to really put some conditioning on their bodies. I usually get two rounds out of the hens but some birds get three rounds and this depends on the conditioning of the hens and how many chicks they rear.

I use Crest Brand seed, which I believe contains 45% canary seed. I also feed sprouted seed, millet sprays and corn on the cob in breeding season. My soft food mix comprises egg and biscuit with boiled eggs (using up to three dozen eggs a week which are supplied by our own chooks) and ID Yeast (vitamin B). I sometimes use Minerals in the water but I am a great believer in Vitamin B12, which I give to them twice a week. I start this a week prior to the beginning of breeding season and continue on through until all the eggs are laid. From then I give it to them once a week.

I also use a pigeon pink powder, which is supplied from Belgium. I find this has many nutrients and is a great value for the birds. It makes them very lively and raring to go when it is time to nest. I feed it to my young fledglings and find it to be a great benefit to them. For the prevention of Mega bacteria I use lemons, grapefruit and lemonade fruit. Since using this for the last four years I have not had one outbreak of Mega bacteria in the birds. I worm the birds twice a year. I also have a program for the prevention of illness in my birds. Like all hobbyist I occasionally lose a bird every now and then. For green food I use spinach, endive, chickweed and carrot.

Carol: *You were very successful in 2004 at the Nationals weren't you?*

Bob: I had a really good National Championship this year obtaining 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Yellow faces: 3<sup>rd</sup> in Opaline: 5<sup>th</sup> in Greygreens: 6<sup>th</sup> in Greys: 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> in Spangle and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Hens Class. Last year I won the Yellow face Class. In 2002 I came 7<sup>th</sup> with my Cinnamon Opaline Hen. With my Yellow faces, I am trying to get shoulder on them and so I stick to using the Grey Normals to improve the shoulder, as my Normals are not too bad. My Yellow Faces came originally from Plunkett and Tasi. The first year I put them to a Normal Hen and the second year I went to Cinnamon Opaline Hens because it gives the birds the length, width and softness of feather as well as improving spot size. I believe that you cannot have too many quality Cinnamon Opaline Hens.



Above: Third placed hen: note the power and length of feather.



Above: The second placed Yellow Face Again lovely length of feather.

Carol: *What do you look for when you pair your birds?*

**Bob:** I look at hens and they must have directional feather. It doesn't matter how long the feather as long as it has direction. The cocks must have what is classed as "blow". 75% of matings put up this way produces direction of feather - I tried using cocks with directional feather and hens with blow and only achieved about 5% with good directional feather. I am a strong believer in the hens giving more to the relationship than the cocks.

People often mix up what is classed as directional feather and what is blow. Blow is when the feathers come from the cere, straight out and then back. These feathers must be long. Sometimes these feathers come over the eye and appears to be directional feather but it isn't because it goes straight back instead of out.

I prepare my birds for breeding by going back to nature a little. About six weeks before breeding season, I put gum branches in the flights and the hens go crazy. They chew the back and splinter the wood. In the early years I used to look at the feather and ignore the cere in determining if a bird was in breeding condition but now I look at the down on the birds, it must be thick. I still consider the cere and the conditioning but a hen with heavy down will incubate the eggs much better. I do trim the feathers of the hens and cocks I pair up to

maximise the mating procedure. With the longer feathered heavier down birds you must do this.

People talk about the feather on the birds but I don't think they put enough emphasis on the down on the feather. I have found that the longer and thicker the down is it makes the shaft thicker as well which pushes the feather outwards and gives the appearance of the bird being bigger than what it is. This will create the impression that the bird has more shoulder than it has.



Above: 3<sup>rd</sup> placed Opaline



Above: a very young Grey. Note the feather direction: width  
Of head: feather blow – maybe a National winner in 2005?

*Carol: How much importance do you place on Normals in the breeding room?*

**Bob:** I put a lot of work into my Normals as I think they have a very strong part to play in my aviary as well as the Cinnamon Opaline Hens I discussed earlier.

*Carol: With your spangles – are they the really dark winged spangles or the normal coloured wing and how do you go about breeding the good wing pattern?*

**Bob:** I have only gone into spangles in the last couple of years and at the moment I am developing them the same way that I did back in the late 80's which is that I look for a normal that has darker markings on the wings as each normal shows various shades of darkness in the wing pattern of the normal. When spangles first came out they had very fine lines and dark markings. Speaking with other fanciers on this subject I have come to the conclusion that too many Opalines have been put into the variety. For the next three to four years I will follow this path that I did years ago and we shall see where it leads me.

*Carol: At the Surfers Paradise Show, you have two really lovely nestfeathers – one was a Light Green cock and the other a Grey cock. Are these birds any relation to the birds that went to Coffs Harbour?*

**Bob:** The light green cock is a nephew to the grey cock that was at the Nationals in Coffs Harbour. The grey cock comes from another line of birds.

Carol: *Your third placed hen at Coffs Harbour – have you got her down? What did you mate her to and why? What was she lacking and what are the chicks like?*

**Bob:** Yes she has been down. I mated her to the 6<sup>th</sup> placed grey cock at Coffs Harbour as they both had directional feather but the hen had plenty of blow but was lacking in spot size. The cock had not much blow but good spot size and width of head and shoulder. I only produced one chick out of one round as it was getting too late to breed. That chick is not too bad but it does not give me a clear indication as what this pairing could produce. Next year I might find out.

Carol: *What have you bred from the Yellow face that won the 2003 National?*

**Bob:** I bred the 10<sup>th</sup> placed Spangle at the Nationals in Coffs Harbour and seven other birds came from him before he stopped producing which was a shame. As well the 2<sup>nd</sup> placed Yellow Faced at Coffs Harbour is a nephew of the 1<sup>st</sup> placed bird in Cairns. I think anybody getting hold of this particular line will produce very handy birds.

Carol: *What is your advice for beginners re purchasing birds? How can they improve in the fancy and not spend too much money?*

**Bob:** I feel that in our hobby the auctions have got out of control. For the beginner most have not got the resources to purchase the quality birds that are required to breed exhibition budgerigars. I think for the beginner instead of going out and buying \$20 and \$30 budgerigars they should do what I did which was saved my money and bought six decent pairs which I paid \$100 - \$150 per bird. The first year I breed 58 birds. I sold 53 of those birds and with the money I went out and purchased more decent birds and like everybody knows in this hobby you must have a bit of luck which I seem to have.

My advice to beginners is to do your research first and only buy from two or three recognised breeders and keep purchasing from these breeders for a couple of years. By purchasing from only two or three recognised breeders you limit the faults that you bring into your aviary.

**STAY AWAY FROM AUCTIONS!!**



The breeding room:



Suspended cages: allowing birds outside conditions without taking up too much space.

Carol: *Are there any other topics you would like to cover?*

**Bob:** Yes there are a couple of topics. The first being Exhibiting Birds. I believe in the last four years I have seen a decline in entries at most shows. I would like to see more exhibitors especially open breeders coming to the shows. Exhibitors also need to prepare their birds properly as I have seen birds with missing flight feathers and no tails. I think that for beginners to see these birds exhibited in this way does not help them to understand the best and proper way of exhibiting budgerigars.

Another item is the Nationals. For South-East Queensland to stand any chance of winning the Nationals we have to have more exhibitors coming along with their birds so we can have the strongest team for the Nationals. At club selections people seem to think that their birds are not good enough to be selected. If they don't bring their birds they will never find out how good they are. Even though I live on the Far North Coast of NSW I exhibit for Queensland and I would like to see us wipe the smiles off NSW and Victoria's face. To do this we all have to bring our birds along to the selection trials.

Imported Birds. The number of birds that were bought into Australia from overseas and the quality of those birds I cannot see why Australian budgie breeders wish to import more birds. For the birds that we have at this time we should be able to produce birds of super quality the same as they do overseas. I do think it is up to breeders to come into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with their thinking. Too many breeders are still doing things the old way. For example the old way of thinking was that bigger was best. Today we have to take into account not only the head quality but the shoulder on the birds, the length of the birds as well as the quality of the feather.

Carol: *What is your favourite way to relax?*

**Bob:** Going to the cinema with my wife and playing with my grandchildren.

Carol: *What is your favourite kind of music?*

**Bob:** Music from the 70's.

Carol: *What is your favourite food/drink?*

**Bob:** Chocolates and pork spare ribs with my wife's home made fried rice. My favourite drink is Fosters Lite.

Carol: *What is your favourite football team?*

**Bob:** The mighty Parramatta Eels.

*(Carol's comment: Gee I liked Bob until that last statement!).*

I sincerely thank Bob for the time and effort he put into the above article. He is a force to contend with on the Show bench and it all looks great for Surfers Paradise Club to retain the shield next year at the Interclub Preselection Show.

