

A Health Regimen That May Prove Helpful

By *Layne Gardner*

In light of the recent health issues with our birds in the past few years I thought I'd share what I'm doing to try and minimize potential disease outbreaks. First, I need to qualify that I'm no veterinarian, and I don't have a strong background in medicine or biology. The regimen I am following was suggested to me by several people and I'm combining what I feel works best for me.

This is a preventative approach to dealing with disease and I am not guaranteeing success. Heck, I'm not guaranteeing anything! This just seems to work for me. Or rather, for my birds.

It seems that our biggest enemy in disease prevention is stress. When the birds get stressed, the immune system becomes compromised and the result is a disease outbreak. How do we exhibit our birds, ie take them to various shows throughout the show season, and not stress them? Here are some guidelines you've heard a million times but after having had a major outbreak perhaps you're a bit more amenable to applying them.

1. Avoid overcrowding. Haven't we all heard this a zillion times? But at the end of the breeding season there are tons of young birds that haven't molted yet and you're not certain whether or not they should stay or go. Well, the reality is (at least for me) there are a few that fall into that category but many, many birds can be evaluated fairly young. Yes, it's true that some birds improve so much with the molt that they surprise us. But not too many fall into that category. Most birds that look mediocre coming out of the nest, remain mediocre. Cull early and you'll rarely be disappointed.
2. Feed and water your birds regularly. I know this sounds weird but there are a few people who don't feed and water on a regular basis. The result is greater stress on the birds.
3. Clean the loft. There is some controversy here as there is some evidence to suggest that keeping the loft a little bit dirty can help to strengthen the immune system since the birds have to fight against potential infections from within the loft itself. My personal preference is for regular cleaning. My loft has slatted wood flooring minimizing exposure to droppings. I also do the majority of breeding in individual cages that have wire flooring, again, to minimize exposure to the droppings. This also makes certain that the cage is dry. Moisture can promote real problems.
4. Use antibiotics as a last resort. There is a place for medications but we need to try and be specific in our treatments. I rarely use antibiotics and the like and mostly for things like canker, which is a protozoan. Also, I vaccinate against PMV-1.

Now, to the regimen. During the breeding season I use the following once a week on the feed at one teaspoon per half gallon bucket of feed: Red Cell, Garlic Oil, Brewers Yeast Powder, Wheat Germ Oil. Additionally, once a week I use one teaspoon of apple cider vinegar in a gallon of water, "Impact" which is a liquid with B vitamins and iodine and dosed according to instructions, Probiotic powder, Nutridrops, Oregano Oil based "Avian Solution". During the Fall I add Adenozap to the routine every other day and alternate with Garlic Oil.

This is a lot of stuff. I am hoping we will get to the point where so many additives are not necessary. However, until we reach that point I will continue to use something similar to that listed above. I welcome input as I certainly do not know everything. The sharing of ideas can be a huge plus for everyone. I haven't listed everything as some things should be intuitive such as separating sick birds from the flock and not bringing sick birds to a show. Good luck and wishing you a healthy and productive breeding season!