

## **MANAGEMENT OF THE MOULT IN CAGE BIRDS**

Dr. Rob Conradie

For the purpose of this article we are assuming it to be in the period December to April.

In the same way as we ensure that the birds go into the breeding season 100% healthy we must ensure that they go into the moult 100% healthy. No unhealthy bird is going to moult properly.

Although the birds may appear healthy it is advisable that they are, at the very least checked for worms and Coccidiosis.

Having to treat these conditions during the moult would then be unnecessary.

This test is done on a faecal sample. Medpet offers a FREE service for this test. Samples can be posted to them using: Postnet. Contact Medpet on 0116148915 or myself on 0834005646.

A Salmonella test can be done on this sample at an additional fee.

Feathers contain 80 to 90% protein. The rest of the feather is made up of oils, fats and water.

From this we can see that the logical approach would be ensuring that the protein and oil levels are adequate.

Proteins are made up of amino acids, and the most important of these for the moult are:-

Lysine

Methionine

Cystine

Oils are provided by:-

Sunflower oil

Wheat germ oil

Linseed oil

Garlic oil

Evening Primrose oil

Flax seed oil

Additional support for feather growth is provided by:-

Vitamins A, D, B, E and K

Minerals and trace elements

Mainly: Calcium, Sodium, Chlorine, Manganese, Zinc, Selenium, Iron, Magnesium and Iodine.

Satisfy yourselves that your basic nutritional program regarding protein and fats is adequate.

It is advisable though, that the bird's normal diet is supplemented by extra vitamins, oils and minerals.

Three Medpet products that can be used are

- **Premolt 5** - added to the drinking water. This product has been *specifically formulated* to provide the birds with optimum nourishment during this period. It can be given every day or 1 – 3 times per week. It also aids in the prevention and treatment of feather plucking.
- **Plume Plus** - an oil mixture contains five of the plant oils mentioned above. This product can be added to the food twice weekly. It also increases fertility.
- **Aminovit H** - containing most of the amino acids, vitamins and minerals needed could also be used. Plume Plus is used to allow powder to adhere to the grain. Used once weekly.
- **Vitaton 34** - although not specifically formulated for supplementation through the moult, is always a good stand-by under any conditions.

Two to three of these products can be used in different combinations at different times. There is no hard-and-fast rule. Nothing is written in stone.

Many other products similar to these three are on the market and can be used in similar ways.

THESE PRODUCTS PRODUCE THEIR BEST RESULTS WHILE THE NEW FEATHERS ARE BEING PRODUCED. ONCE FEATHER GROWTH IS COMPLETED THE EFFECT THEY HAVE WILL BE MINIMAL BY COMPARISON.

- Probiotics (Enteroplus and/or Intestum) added to the food or water during this time would improve food utilization and aid in boosting the bird's general immunity and health.

Eliminate all external parasites from the cages. It is a pointless doing all you can to promote healthy feather growth only to allow external parasites to damage them all again. The birds themselves damage the feathers as well when they bite and scratch as a result of the irritation caused.

- Avian Insect Liquidator is the product most commonly used. It can be used on the birds and the cages and it has a residual effect.

Normal relaxed preening helps keep the feathers in shape.

- Allow the birds to bath twice a week where possible. Medpet Bath Salts help to keep the feathers clean. It also helps prevent feather plucking.

Avoid stressing the birds. This prolongs the moult.