

Old Variety Canary: Lancashire

HISTORY

The origin of the Lancashire Canary has never been documented but it is believed to have been evolved from an old Dutch breed that was brought to this country in the eighteenth century by Flemish weavers. By the late Victorian times it has probably reached the peak of its development but it never achieved any great popularity outside its native country. From the late 1870's onwards it began to be used in the evolution or improvement of other breeds, notably the Crest, the Norwich and the Yorkshire. The inroads that were made upon Lancashire stocks for this purpose caused a steady drop in numbers and this, plus various other reasons, resulted in the breed beginning to lose ground. This decline continued throughout the present century and it is probable that the last pure-bred stocks became extinct during the Second World War, or very soon afterwards. All present-day Lancashire's have been "reconstituted" from the breeds to which it contributed in the past.

BREEDING

The Lancashire is not particularly difficult to breed and rear but it is not as free as some of the smaller breeds of canary. It is amenable to the usual standard methods of management but allowances should be made for its exceptional size. In the past breeders sometimes made use of foster parents, partly because Lancashire hens were alleged to be lazy feeders, and partly because size needs feeding for as well as breeding for, and the sharing out of youngsters to two per hen was regarded as a useful means to that end.

MATING

Coppies should always be mated to Plainheads and yellows to buffs. It makes no difference which way the pairs are made up. e.g.

Yellow Cobby Cock	x	Buff Plainhead Hen
Buff Cobby Cock	x	Yellow Plainhead Hen
Yellow Plainhead Cock	x	Buff Cobby Hen
Buff Plainhead Cock	x	Yellow Cobby Hen

The genetic expectations from these matings are all similar, i.e. 50% Plainheads (Yellows and Buffs). There is no sex-lineage and the Coppies and Plainheads may be of either sex. (Occasionally two buffs can be mated together and this may lead to an increase in size, but two yellows should never be mated. Owing to certain genetic complications it is not advisable to mate two Coppies together and at the same time; it is wasteful to mate two Plainheads as this procedure only produces plainheaded young.)

MOULTING

Owing to its large frame and abundance of feather the Lancashire needs generous feeding during the moult, care being taken that the diet is not too low in protein. At the same time, ample room for exercise must be allowed so that the birds do not become over fat and sluggish. The Lancashire is a natural color showbird and therefore needs no color food during the moult.

SHOWING

The Lancashire is shown in an open wire cage with a wooden base, somewhat similar in design to that of the Yorkshire. The top however is flat instead of being rounded. A certain amount of training is needed so that the birds will hold itself up well and show to its full advantage when in front of the judge.

STANDARD

The following was the standard drawn up by the old Lancashire and Lizard Fanciers' Association and which has been adopted the Old Varieties Canary Association.

The Lancashire should be a large bird, of a good length and stoutness, and when in the show cage should have a bold look. The Cobby should be of a horse-show shape, commencing behind the eye line and lay close to the skull, forming a frontal three-quarters of a circle without any break in its shape or formation, and should radiate from its centre with a slight droop. There should be no roughness at the back of the skull. The neck should be long and thick, the feathers lying soft and close the shoulders broad, the back long and full, and the chest bold and wide. The wings of the Lancashire should be long; giving to the bird what is called a long-sided appearance. The tail also should be long. When placed in a show cage the bird should stand erect easy and graceful, being bold in its appearance, and not timid or crouching. It should not be dull or slothful looking and should move about with ease and elegance. Its legs should be long, and in strength match the appearance of the body. When standing upright in the cage the tail should droop slightly, giving the bird the appearance of having a slight curve from the beak to the end of the tail. The Lancashire should neither stand across the perch nor show a hollow back. It should have plenty of feathers, lying closely to the body, and the feather should be fine and soft. The properties of the Plainhead are the same as the Cobby, with the exception of the head. The head should be broad and rather long, with the eyebrows clearly defined and overhanging, or what is called lashed. The feathers on the head should be soft and plentiful, and not look tucked or whipped up from behind the eye into the neck. The aim in breeding should be to keep and improve the size and length of the bird, at the same time losing nothing of its gracefulness, its beauty of feather and general contour.