DON'T INTERFERE WITH THE BREEDING PAIRS MORE THAN NECESSARY.

Many setbacks can occur during the breeding season, but it ought not to be assumed that disaster regularly befalls every breeder.
With knowledge and understanding, plus keen and attentive observation of all that happens in the breeding cages, steps can often be taken to overcome obstacles as they arise, and with a little forethought, much can be done to lessen the risk of many ever happening at all. Sometimes a hen that is sitting on eggs or chicks will leave the nest and show no further interest in motherhood. Provided this desertion is noticed in good time little harm should result. The contents of the nest can be placed under one or more pairs of foster parents. Most pairs that are breeding will usually accept eggs and/ or chicks, although it is sometimes unwise to introduce new youngsters over three weeks old. Many fosters do not favour fully fledged chicks being thrust upon them and,although their disdain may not be noticeable, trouble could result. Where possible the older babies should be left with the parent cock bird and in most cases he will continue feeding them. Place them in an open topped box on the floor of the cage and wait a couple of hours to see if they are getting attention. If not, then hand feeding may have to be resorted to.

**LOSS OF CONDITION**

There are three main reasons that cause a hen to desert her responsibility. The first is a loss of breeding condition, possibly brought about because matters were forced in the early stages when the hen was not at the peak of condition. The second is due to an objection being taken to the nest box. It may be that the box, when taken out for inspection, was not returned to its original position, or perhaps the first box was replaced by another during the process of cleaning. A strong smell of disinfectant can also cause a hen to desert her nest.
Therefore, it is advisable to leave the nest box alone, other than scraping out any excess excreta, for the fulli period of incubation and rearing. If the boxes have to be cleaned out or changed this task is better left until the young are out in the cages.
Another reason for desertion is when the hen falls sick or suffers some discomfort. For example, a foot can swell owing to an abrasion caused by grit getting lodged under the closed ring.
A hen will, in most cases, continue her duties if the ring is removed and the leg washed and treated with an antiseptic ointment.. A hen that has suffered from the other two complaints, however, should be rested, until the following season.
It is not uncommon for a hen to die while she is breeding. Generally she is found on the floor of the cage, but not always so, and eggs in the box may be chilled. It is worth trying to save these eggs by placing them under foster parents after warming them in the hands. If there are young in the nest, and very much depending upon the age of them, the cock bird may have taken over the duty of feeding. Provided he continues to do so, all is well. If, however, the young are found to be cold and apparently lifeless make every attempt to revive them. Chicks deprived of food and body warmth pass into a state of coma before finally succumbing from the effects.
Switch on the hospital cage to attain as near as possible 100 degrees fahrenheit, and while the temperature is building up enclose the young into the cupped hands and breathe on them to provide extra warmth. Sometimes, even before the hospital cage is used a twitching will be noticed and within half an hour movement should be obvious on the paper covered floor of the cage, and then the time has come to place them under suitable foster parents.

**LEGS SPREAD OUT**

When a chick is two or three days old its legs may be seen to be spread out. At this tender age it is impossible to tell whether the cause is rickets or due to the mother sitting too heavy. In either case it is advisable to take the baby away and place it under foster parents, and substitute an older one of five or six days.
To relieve the pressure from the mother's body weight ensure that there are at least two eggs in the nest at all times. Clear eggs can be used if they are warmed previously. After the youngest chick is two weeks of age the practice can be discontinued. By this time they will be stronger and more likely nestle under the wing of the parent rather than below the body. Unfortunately, I know of no cure for rickets and the affected youngster is best destroyed if it develops with the legs spread wide apart. This complaint will rarely arise if a sufficiency of vitamin D is absorbed by the parent hen before breeding commences. Cod liver oil, which is rich in this vitamin, can be added to the normal seed during the autumn and winter months, and as calcium is vital to strong bones, this mineral should be offered all the year round in the form of cuttlefish bone.

**NIGHT FRIGHT**

At any age, but more often when the youngsters are under three weeks old, a parent bird may deliberately kill one or more in a nest. Often there seems to be no apparent reason for this, but one explanation of why parents turn vicious is that they undergo a fright. Mice, sudden noises and flashing lights at night all serve to bring on this strange panic that we call "night fright". Another cause could be the outcome of fostering out youngsters. Maybe one of the foster parents does not take kindly to these strangers it could be that some birds have this wicked streak in their make-up brought about by a condition of which we have no knowledge. To give an instance, I once had a young hen that killed her first born chick, she hatched the second one and promptly disposed of it too. The remaining eggs were fostered out and on the second round I took one more chance with her but she again destroyed the first born chick. As she did not exhaust herself from feeding, I allowed a third round and fostered all the eggs before hatching time. The following year, as there were not enough cages to spare for hens that would not rear successfully, I experimented with this bird once more. Its first youngster hatched out and it was fed, then the second and the third and so on. With the second round and in subsequent years, this hen proved to be a model mother,as good or better than any in the aviary.