**STARTING WITH CRESTS** **By Ghalib AI Nasser
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Unlike other varieties, obtaining Crests is not that easy. Few fanciers specialise in this variety and accessing the limited available stock is a problem. The majority of Crested breeders, like those of other specialist varieties, are very dedicated fanciers and they always do their utmost to upgrade the variety. Top quality Crests can't he bought as they are few and far between. So my suggestion is to buy from anyone who is able to sell you the variety. Visiting Specialist & Rare Variety Shows and of course the BS Club Show will give greater opportunity to view more Crests on the bench and also to meet crested fanciers.
If an established fancier wants to take up the challenge of breeding Crests then he/she will in my opinion, first attempt to speak to some well known crested fanciers to understand the variety: perhaps join the (Crested Budgerigar Club and most of all buy their Handbook. At 3 pounds (plus postage) it is a must and cannot be missed with 8 chapters covering 60 pages. Information on how to understand the genetics of Crests and how to breed with them will lay a strong foundation for years to come.
Because there we three types of Crest, Tufted, Half Circular, and Full Circular and the Crest breds (normal looking birds bred from Crested parentage) I suggest buying two or three pairs consisting of a visual Crest and Crest bred. It does not matter what type of crest you have as any of the three types can breed all the three types when paired to a crest bred. When you have bred some visual Crests it will be time to upgrade the size by putting the crests into quality Normals.

**LUCK ON YOUR SIDE**
As I have stated above. if you are able to obtain two pairs then this is a good start If luck is on your side then you will be able to breed a few visuals in the first year from the correct pairing. It does not matter what sex the crest is because they are not sex linked. The Crested genetics is a bit complex and the chapter in the Handbook explains it thoroughly. They are semi-dominant in so far as from the suggested pairing some visual Crests should appear in the nest but the percentage will vary from one pair to another.
A good strong Crest is essential whether it be a Tuft or a Circular. There are many variations from the Crested ideals, I have bred Tufts with a few feathers, tufts failing to one side, a few feathers sticking up, 1/4 of a crest and so on. I can use these birds perhaps as Crest breds but as initial stock a new fancier will need birds with a strong crest of any of the three variants. Having said all that, if the only crests available are those with faults then perhaps it is better to start with them first as they may possibly breed you the perfect Crests. It is a matter of what is available on the market. How many winning Crested studs are around at any one time? As I said earlier not many birds of this variety are available for sale. And most of the crested breeders would have had at one stage or another, the blood line of the winning studs of that time. With this variety it is not that important because you can introduce the size later (from your own established "Nomal" stud). Because this, Crested outcrosses are not really necessary although sometimes I have not been able to get the outcrosses that I want and I settle for Crest breds as the outcrosses.

**What is PURE**
With this variety you need to combine a crested bird that have the perfect crest and a good size Budgerigar. My circular Grey Green cock, that won Best Crest at the BS Club Show three consecutive years 1987 99 and at the 1990 BS Convention, was bred from a Tufted to a Normal. The Circular dark Green of Mick Widdowson which is an excellent example of the variety and has done a lot of winning over the past few years must have had a lot of Normal blood in it; so what is pure? In this variety, my definition of pure is continuous pairing of Crest to Crest. This is fine as no doubt you will produce a strain of birds with strong crested genes. As from an exhibition budgerigar point of view that is another matter. Also, keep away from in breeding, if possible. That is why I would prefer buying my initial two pairs from two different studs. This will enable pairing the two families he following year without any worry. Achieving the perfectt crest (regardless of type) on a good Budgerigar will always be difficult and either one con be lost easily with incorrect pairing. The Crest is a feather mutation and can be combined with virtually any colour or variety. They have their own classes at shows where the BS mandatory classification is in operation. They also have their own challenge certificates at BS Championship type patronage shows.
So they can be accepted on any other bird. Having said all that, I cannot see any merit in combining the Crest with recessive varieties. Although on occasions there have been some good specimens of Crested Dilutes around. I say keep the Crested variety with the Normals, Opalines, Cinnamons; and of course Spangles and Dominant Pieds, i.e. all the dominant varieties. My success with this variety, and I have achieved a lot over 25 years, is attributed mainly to total dedication, patience, repeated digging into my Normal stud for outcrosses but most of all LUCK.