**Feather Plucking
(Geoff West).**

Every experienced fancier has at some time been asked.

"What is the reason for some Budgerigars plucking their young?"
and the answer usually is, "I really don't know".

Three questions you would ask yourself, after receiving this answer would be.

*Is it hereditary?
Is it a physical problem?
Is it a lack of some nutrient in the Cock or Hen?*

Overseas many fanciers are of the opinion that it is hereditary and is recessive in some birds, but not in others. Any mannerism, physical condition or likeness, will be inherited from both parents and will be passed on from generation to generation in a recessive form.

The physical make up of a bird, particularly the nervous system, could well be the cause of feather plucking young in the nest. Old Canary fanciers used rusty nails in the drinking water and claimed they had good success re feather plucking. The iron would tone up both the arterial & nervous system.

The use of iron preparations could be tried,to see if it had any bearing re feather plucking. Various iron preparations can be procured at your Chemist.

My own view is that feather plucking is caused through a physical condition,mainly stress,during the incubation period, plus boredom, and the end result is that either the Cock or Hen become highly strung & pluck the down & feathers from their young. A comparison would be human beings who bite their nails. This cannibalism is without exception related to nerves.

Feather plucking could be hereditary, and be recessive in some members of a family of Budgerigars. All feather pluckers are not the product of hereditary factors,and some birds do not express this pernicious habit until their second breeding season.

Both Cock and Hen feather pluck their young, but in most instances, it is the Hen that is the culprit.

It is advisable where feather plucking occurs, to note whether it is indeed the Cock or the Hen doing this. Take the Cock away first, and if the feather plucking continues, you know which is the culprit.

If it discontinues then it is the Cock bird. Whichever is the culprit if not a top class bird,rid yourself of it. You should record any birds that indulge in this pernicious habit when rearing chicks, and note the fact in your breeding records, so that you can take the necessary action if you breed with them later.

All birds learn by example from their parents, so if you see feathers disappear from the chicks,move them into other nests where possible. Any young that have been feather plucked and on attaining adulthood, are to be used for breeding, should be watched very carefully when their young start to feather, as they have learned by example,and I have found,quite often,they pluck their chicks. There is no conclusive evidence relating to why Budgerigars pluck their young, and it appears, that to date, there are only theories.

I believe the best way to control this cannibalism is:
Feed your birds on a good quality seed mixture.
See that their water is clean, and presented in such a way, that it cannot be fouled by droppings, or any other foreign body. Use a soluble Multi Vitamin powder in the water twice a week, and whilst breeding.
Discard Canary Shell Grit & use Mineralised Pigeon Grit.
Feed an adequate supply of green feed.
Have a mineralised salt lick in each of your flights.
Rigidly adhere to culling out feather pluckers, unless they quality birds that you cannot afford to dispose of.
In conclusion. In quite a few articles I have read, relating to feather plucking, it appears that where partly cooked meat was hung in the aviaries for the birds to pick at, those birds never feather plucked.