

Training the Spanish Timbrado Canary for a Song Show

By

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You had a successful breeding season, the young canaries are singing, show time is here. What an exciting time, your team is placed in front of the judge and then.....not a sound. There is nothing more frustrating than your birds not singing in front of the judge. It's all about training, training and more training.

I'll share today what works for me based on many years of experience. This is the process I use and hopefully will help you be successful at a song show. This is a 3 to 4 weeks process before the show.

The training consists of periods of light and darkness, getting the birds used to singing when stimulated by light and being comfortable in an environment away from the aviary.

The first step is to ensure that you start with clean stackable show cages. Most likely the show cages have been stored for a while and could be covered in dust or spider webs. Check your cages, clean them and set them out in the sun for a couple of hours to disinfect.

Next you would need a training area, I use a spare bedroom, it can be a bathroom or a closet. I cover all windows with fabric, cardboard, black trash bags, or anything to block daylight. I cover the floor with a tarp and just about everything else in the room with plastic. I use a portable folding table to stage the birds.

Time to catch your birds and place them in the clean show cages with seed and water. Make sure your seed mix does not include hemp seeds, why? Canaries love to play with hemp seeds before they eat them. You don't want your bird to play instead of singing in front of the judge. Take note of the bird's ID band and make sure you remove all non-closed bands. I usually write the band number on blue removable tape that I attached to the cage or I use bread plastic ties. Whatever you use, it will need to be removed from the cage prior to judging.

Place the cages on the table in rows and allow the birds to see at each other. The idea is so that they see their mates and keeps them calm and start getting used to a different surrounding. Keep the birds this way for about 3 days. Maintain the same light schedule that the birds are used to. On day 4, stack the cages four high and don't allow the birds to see each other. I use cardboard between the stacks.

Now it's time to mess with the lights. The birds need to be in and out of the light intermittently until show time. Start with getting the birds into darkness for small periods of time, bring them into the light for a longer time period and then back into the dark (half an hour darkness, twice a day for two days). Increase the amount of time in the dark and the number of times per day (three hours darkness, three times per day, for two days). Continue this way increasing dark times, decreasing light times until the day of the show. I make a schedule going backwards from the day of the show so that at the time of the show my birds get three half hours of light per day. Any of these periods need to be at random during the day. I accomplish all this with a timer switch and lamps. Since the birds get stimulated with the light, this allows them to just get going as soon as light is present. The birds will be more than ready to

sing with the light. All this takes place for about three weeks, don't forget to change food and water and keep the cages clean.

That was just half of the training, the other half is to get the birds used to motion, going in and out of the transport cabinets, noises, people, different environment and climate. So, while all the dark and light periods are taking place you need to work on this other part of the training at the same time. Get the birds in and out of the transport cabinets; during the periods of light, take them to different rooms to sing, place them in front of the muted TV. The birds need to get used to different surroundings. Sit in front of the birds and pretend to be the judge, use different hats, glasses, wigs, whatever you can think of to make yourself look different; the birds can get used to you. The show is not at your place so take them for car rides, they need to get used to be loaded into a vehicle and the motion. Don't feel like riding? if you have a clothes dryer with a flat top, place the birds on top and run a drying cycle. Get creative, simulate whatever conditions you can think of to get the birds used to motion and commotion.

Listen to the birds as often as you can and be sure they are healthy and alert. Group your teams by families if possible or put teams together with birds that sound alike. Remember it's all about training, training and more training. I rather have a bird scored than having one not singing at all. It's definitely not the bird's fault, it's the breeder's fault.

It's great to win and get a trophy or medal but most important is to compete and show your birds.

I wish you the best of luck and many great shows.