

Egg Laying Support Programme for Pet Birds

Carlingford Animal Hospital

Egg laying is commonly seen in female pet birds even when a male bird is not present. It occurs when the female bird becomes sexually bonded to her owner and some species such as cockatiels, lorikeets and Eclectus parrots, who are hard wired to lay eggs, are especially prone to this behaviour. Once egg laying begins it may be difficult to break the cycle and when too many eggs are laid additional nutritional support becomes imperative to prevent complications such as dysfunctional ovaries, egg peritonitis, cystic ovaries, egg binding and other life threatening problems.

Hormone implants are sometimes necessary to stop excessive egg-laying behaviour.

Immediate Treatment of Egg Laying Problems

When egg laying complications such as egg binding and egg peritonitis occur it may be necessary to hospitalise seriously ill birds for crop feeding and emergency treatment. A high energy food containing a calcium supplement is given by crop needle to immediately restore energy and calcium levels and begin the recovery process.

The **Egg Laying Immediate Treatment Programme** (over page) should then be implemented to provide a sustained energy and calcium supply for the next 7 days. During this critical time it may also be necessary to incorporate antibiotics into the Immediate Treatment Plan according to the dropping test results. Following this initial 7 day treatment plan, the Egg Laying Support Programme is followed for 4 weeks.

Egg Laying Support Programme

The **Egg Laying Support Programme** (over page) should start immediately when nesting behaviour appears, at the onset of an egg laying episode or following the above immediate treatment programme. The support programme follows a weekly cycle and continues for 4-6 weeks. After this time the normal nutritional health programme is resumed. It is best to leave the eggs with your female for at least 7 days following her last egg to allow her to fully recover from the exertions of egg laying. This will decrease the potential for additional stress and allow your bird to complete a full egg laying cycle without further hardship and also lengthen the period between cycles.

The Egg Laying Support Programme should also be introduced whenever egg laying behaviour is suspected, especially following cold spells between June and September when egg laying problems are most prevalent. The early signals of impending egg laying activity include chewing branches, going to the floor to make a nest, or other behavioural changes such as tail lifting or sexual activity. Introduce the Egg Laying Support Programme at the first signs of this behaviour.

Modification of Egg Laying Behaviour

Behavioural modification techniques are incorporated into this programme to discourage egg laying. This may include moving the cage to another room or putting your bird in a different area where they do not feel it is safe to lay eggs. Turning off or reducing heating during winter may also be beneficial in halting egg laying behaviour and thereby preventing the opportunity for egg laying problems to arise. Also ensure nest boxes, nesting material are removed and all access to nesting areas is denied.

Tailai is available to talk about other ways to reduce the desire to lay eggs. Desexing or hormonal therapy may need to be considered for birds that do not fully respond to this programme.

Egg Laying Immediate Treatment Programme (7 days)

This immediate treatment programme is followed for the 7 days after an egg laying complication (e.g. egg binding) has occurred. Quik Gel and Hi-Cal are provided in the drinking water to provide a sustained source of energy and calcium whilst your bird recovers from its egg laying condition. Antibiotic treatments may also be incorporated into this initial treatment programme according to the results of dropping analysis. Dietary changes including introducing more "wet" foods (i.e. boiled rice, mushy beans and cooked vegetables) may also be recommended.

	Optional Medication	In Drinking Water	On Sterile Seed	Dietary Recommendations
Day 1	*Medications are mixed with drinking water supplements	Quik Gel & Hi-Cal ¹	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ²	<input type="checkbox"/> Cooked rice
Day 2		Quik Gel & Hi-Cal ¹	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ²	<input type="checkbox"/> Cooked beans
Day 3		Quik Gel & Hi-Cal ¹	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ²	<input type="checkbox"/> Cooked vegetables
Day 4		Quik Gel & Hi-Cal ¹	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ²	<input type="checkbox"/> Apple/Orange
Day 5		Quik Gel & Hi-Cal ¹	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ²	<input type="checkbox"/> Apple puree
Day 6		Quik Gel & Hi-Cal ¹	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ²	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Day 7		Quik Gel & Hi-Cal ¹	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ²	Disinfect the cage and feeding utensils with KD Powder ³

¹ Mix 1 drop Quik Gel and 1ml Hi-Cal thoroughly into 100ml drinking water. May also be given with fruit, vegetables or nectar.

² To 100gm of sterile seed add 6 drops of Turbobooster and mix thoroughly. Then add 1gm (white spoon) each of E-Powder and F-Vite and mix again so that these powders stick to the Turbobooster oil impregnated seed.

³ Mix 1gm KD Powder (white spoon) into 1 litre of drinking water. Fill the water vessel and use the remainder to clean the cage.

Egg Laying Support Programme (4 weeks)

The Egg Laying Support Programme follows the Immediate Treatment Programme (above) and continues for 4-6 weeks. This programme should also be followed whenever egg laying activity is suspected (e.g. nesting behavior appears) or at the onset of an egg laying episode. The aim of this programme is to provide the additional nutrition, energy and calcium required for egg laying and to thereby prevent egg laying complications.

	In Drinking Water	On Sterile Seed	Dietary Recommendations
Day 1	Quik Gel & Hi-Cal ¹	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ⁵	Provide beans, rice and/or fruit as directed by Dr Marshall as daily shared meals in the morning and evening. <input type="checkbox"/> Cooked rice <input type="checkbox"/> Cooked beans <input type="checkbox"/> Cooked vegetables <input type="checkbox"/> Apple/Orange <input type="checkbox"/> Apple puree <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Day 2	Quik Gel & Hi-Cal ¹	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ⁵	
Day 3	Ioford, Dufoplus & Hi-Cal ²	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ⁵	
Day 4	KD Powder ³	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ⁵	
Day 5	Inca Honey & Hi-Cal ⁴	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ⁵	
Day 6	Fresh water	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ⁵	
Day 7	Fresh water	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ⁵	

¹ Mix 1 drop Quik Gel and 1ml Hi-Cal thoroughly into 100ml drinking water. May also be given with fruit, vegetables or nectar.

² Mix 1ml Hi-Cal, 10 drops Ioford and 5 drops Dufoplus thoroughly into 100ml of drinking water.

³ Mix 1gm KD Powder (white spoon) into 1 litre of drinking water. Fill the water vessel and use the remainder to clean the cage.

⁴ Mix 6 drops Inca Honey and 1ml Hi-Cal thoroughly into 100ml drinking water.

⁵ To 100gm of sterile seed add 6 drops of Turbobooster and mix thoroughly. Then add 1gm (white spoon) each of E-Powder and F-Vite and mix again so that these powders stick to the Turbobooster oil impregnated seed.