

PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS IN BIRDSRed Eared Firetails:

Observations by a local aviculturist which have been confirmed by an eminent German scientist have revealed that psychological stress can cause mortality in caged birds if alien factors are introduced to their aviary.

The case in point was the sudden death of Red eared Firetails in an aviary following the introduction of noisier Cockateils.

The Red eared Firetails of course are described best as a secretive bird liking quiet and peaceful surroundings.

Its nest in natural surroundings is a bulky structure compactly built of long grasses with a spout like entrance thinly lined with feathers and plant down. In forest areas it usually builds in small trees and is usually well camouflaged.

As a result of these observations stringent conditions have been laid down and they will be strictly observed.

They are -

1. Each pair of birds shall be confined in a space not less than 2,000 cubic feet, preferably measuring 20' x 10' x 10'.
2. No more than two pairs of birds shall be held in the one cage irrespective of its size.
3. Aviaries are to be thickly planted with native shrubs which will not have to be trimmed as disturbance of the birds when cutting the shrubs can cause mortality.
4. The vegetation must be heavily watered.
5. Heads of sword grass (*Lepidosperma* Spp.) to be regularly supplied to the birds with fresh supplies at least weekly.
6. Shelter from winds at ground level to be provided preferably with something like galvanised iron to a height of at least 2'6" from the ground.

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7. No other species of fauna whatsoever to be kept in the same cage as Red eared Firetails irrespective of the size of the cage.

Approval to keep these birds will only be given if the Department is satisfied that the applicant is able to faithfully observe the above conditions and properly care for the birds.

