



“Parrots: Their Lives... Our Choice”

Help! My cockatiels are exhibiting breeding behavior.

Hi! I have two cockatiels approx 11-14 years old. For the last two years, they never paid attention to one another. This last weekend, they began to mate. (I guess that explains the recent hostility to me and my husband, and the chewing up perches and burrowing) I have zero experience with this. Are they too old to lay eggs? Should I get a nesting box? What should I do? Please advise me!

A couple of things - what are the genders of your cockatiels? Even same sex pairs will exhibit this type of mating and breeding behavior. Most likely the birds aren't hostile to you - they just have other things on their mind due to the reproductive triggers this time of year. If either of the birds are females, has one ever laid an egg before? The nesting behavior is nature driving the reproductive behavior for your birds - it's not a choice for them. Since they're chewing up the perches, give them lots of new branches, cardboard or other destructibles. You also want to remove any thing that resembles a nest box - frankly, if you have a true pair, the pet world doesn't need more baby cockatiels. Some 'tiels lay until their late teens and even into their 20's. You'll also want to reconsider a few things in the birds' environment: diet, bathing, exercise, foraging, flight or no flight, view, natural light and darkness. Housing is a very important aspect of keeping your birds active; you should provide them the largest cage that you can with plenty of side-to-side area for them to fly to and from. Remember that birds don't routinely fly straight up or down, so cylindrical or tall narrow cages are not appropriate for pet birds, even though they're commonly sold in pet stores. Each of these things are potential contributors to a birds' reproductive behaviors. Consider spray misting them daily, offer food foraging opportunities on the bottom of their cage, feed fresh leafy greens, provide them some new toys and other activities. If they've been snugglers with you and your husband in the past, then you might want to invest in target training or teaching them some new behaviors that are interactive with you. There are many reinforcers to a cockatiels' reproductive behaviors, so to change their behavior, you'll need to make some environmental changes for them. www.acstiels.com has some helpful information; so does www.cockatielcottage.net, and www.lafeber.com/pet-birds. I hope this info is helpful and it should be a great place for you to start to work with your birds.