

# BEFORE YOU BREAK THAT EGG

*Remember that every broken egg is a dead egg!*

*By Betty Rea WA*

My experience with breaking eggs has been a traumatic one and so I write in order to remind myself that there are other avenues to be taken before actually breaking an egg.

In my very early impatient days of breeding I broke the occasional egg that had not hatched on time, often regretting the loss of a bird. There was one particular day, which was the turning point – I swore never to break another egg after that.

I was checking an egg that I had fostered from a really special pair and it was due to have hatched. I took out **the** egg and looked at it. It had a big clear space at one end. I thought – that's had it! So I broke it to find out - and the little bird inside was moving. I went inside and read up my notes and discovered that the clear space at the end is the air pocket needed by the little bird if it is to break through the shell and hatch. Now why had I not read that first? It was a hard lesson to learn. I needed to read, then act, and “get it right”, instead of reading after the event to find out what I had done wrong.

I anguished for days and swore that **never ever again** would I break an egg. I despised myself for what I'd done apologising over and over to the birds concerned. Not long after I had some eggs which had been sitting in boxes long after the siblings had hatched and what did I do? Broke eggs **again**. Would I never learn?

I kept trying to teach myself not to interfere but I was not a good learner.

A little further down the road of experience I had two Lutino hens sitting at the same time. They were sisters and I sat one with a large Grey/Green male and one with a Green split to Lutino. Both laid and both sat. One had half a dozen fertile eggs; the other had half a dozen unfertilised eggs. Suddenly, for no apparent reason, about a week before hatching time the one with the fertile eggs decided to leave the nest. She'd been out of it for about three days before I intervened. I had checked regularly and she was not going back to the eggs, which were quite cold so I thought that I had nothing to lose by putting the fertile eggs under the other hen whose eggs were duds. Just to “be sure” I broke a couple and the eggs were definitely fertile – had I used my brain at all I would have stopped after the first egg knowing that having bright blood there was a chance that they were in fact alive and retrievable. I ended up with three eggs under the remaining hen. She kept sitting but nothing happened and when the hatching date had well and truly passed with no results I turned the parents out and broke the eggs. They were still alive and the last one squeaked and came out probably a few hours before it would have of its own accord. Once again I was left kicking myself and really resenting my own idiocy.

I popped the baby under a hen who had much larger babies and hoped for the best. She fed it and kept it alive for about five days before it died.

What did I learn from that experience? Several things I hope.

Eggs are worth giving a second chance, even if they have been allowed to get cold and have been deserted for a few days.

Eggs will not necessarily hatch on their due date. I have read of someone who had eggs hatch after being incubated for 33 days so don't give up if the eggs are overdue in hatching.

Patience would have yielded up to six chicks. **Every broken egg is a dead egg.**

Now after all that wouldn't you think I would have learned? Yet only weeks later I did it again. Fortunately the result was not a disaster. I had found an egg in the bottom of a cage after the hen had brought out three chicks. I thought – oh, that one's a dud and she's thrown it out. On the other hand maybe it just got caught on her feathers and came out by accident. So as to give it every chance I marked it and popped it in a box with a whole horde of little baby birds to keep it warm. It got kicked aside and again I thought, oh well mum bird knows when an egg is no good and disposes of it. It kicked about for a week and when it almost fell out of the box I thought it had finally had its day. So I **broke** it. It squeaked and out came a perfect little bird. I gave him back to his own mother and he thrived.

Another learning curve.

Eggs can be ejected from the nesting box accidentally and still be viable.

Eggs can be kicked around the nesting box, and not even sat on properly and still be viable.

Eggs should not be broken until all the rest of the kids have grown up and left home!

Then there was the time right at the end of the breeding season when I decided to give another two Lutinos, and a pair of Green Opaline/Lutino brothers, a chance to crown the season as it were. All went well. They paired up and sat. They began laying – in tandem. Then, one attacked her eggs and broke the first two. My remedy was to give the birds at least one chance with some marbles.

She sat faithfully on her marbles and when I was sure that she was settled into nesting mode I gave back her eggs which I had marked and fostered out. Each bird was eventually sitting on eight eggs! All appeared to be going well when suddenly the problem bird again began attacking her eggs. The four remaining fertile eggs were placed under the only foster available, not a very suitable one as her own sole baby was already feathering up. She tolerated them for a week or so and then she too began breaking eggs – I caught her early and removed the three remaining eggs. It crossed my mind to put them under the other Lutino but she had eight eggs of her own. She was so protective of her eggs that I had not examined them closely assuming that because there were some fertile eggs they all were. **If only I had thought outside the square!** I later found, that of her eight eggs, only three were fertile, she could easily have taken on the three eggs which only days before I had so reluctantly broken to check and then discarded. Hindsight is a marvellous thing!



I still have a lot to learn when it comes to budgie breeding but if there's one thing I really want to get into my head it is **not to break eggs!**

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*This is what can happen if you refrain from breaking those eggs*