

The Club Show is coming home!

I cannot recall a more controversial issue within the budgerigar hobby in recent times than the movement of the date of the Budgerigar Society World Championship Show (“the Club Show”) from November to September. However, following a recent meeting of the General Council, it has been decided that the show shall return to its original date as from 2012 – a decision, which my father and I are very pleased with indeed!

The thinking behind moving the show date in the first place was mainly centred around the adverse weather conditions, which one usually expects in November together with the clocks going back at the end of October. Fanciers from the South Coast of England or the Highlands of Scotland faced a long arduous journey in potentially hazardous driving conditions. In addition, exhibitors, show officials and visitors to the show were forced to drive home on the Sunday in darkness adding to the strain of what is a very long weekend for anyone to endure.

However, the decision based on these grounds had much wider consequences than the decision makers at the time could have envisaged. When the show was in November, it was held as the climax of the show season. The vast majority of major shows had been and gone and all of the rumours about who was going to win it were in full swing leading to much anticipation of the main event. The movement of the date effectively stunted the show season whereby the Club Show was what many fanciers regarded as being three quarters of the way through the normal show season. This meant that our original show calendar had to be scrapped.

Prior to the new date for the Club Show, we used to start showing in around June and continued right through until the start of September with our last championship show being The Great Nor Western at Blackpool. The problem with the new date was that my father and I always apply a strict 12 week show preparation routine for our birds before the Club Show. Therefore, if you count the 12 weeks before the Club Show, 90% of the normal show calendar is effectively ruled out for us. Not only have we missed out on the joys of showing all around the country but we have been hindered from supporting shows that we have done so since 1996.

One of the saddest losses, which I attribute to the change in date was the loss of The Great Nor Western Show in Blackpool. Admittedly, there were other factors behind the demise of this show but what went from being the premier show event in the North of England, had its feet swept from underneath it, which was illustrated by a sharp decline in numbers in the first show after the new Club Show date. This show is sorely missed and I sincerely hope that the Club Show returning to its original date will lead to a resurrection of The Great Nor Western.

The other major problem with show being held in September is the additional challenge that the majority of exhibitors will face in trying to have their birds in top notch condition for the big event. As mentioned above, we have always adopted a 12 week preparation routine: all the birds potentially suitable for the show are placed in their own flight, at 12 weeks, the first tail feather is removed from each bird, at 10 weeks, the second tail feather is removed, at 6 weeks, all of the spots are removed and at 5 weeks the birds are placed into breeding cages and worked on with the spraying

of water and general preening (and other top secret preparations!). When the show was in November, this routine enabled us to bench in the region of 30 to 40 birds year in year out. Following this same routine but with the date now in September, we now bench no more than 10 -15 birds at the show. You may think that this is because we must be losing our touch but you'd be wrong! The real reason is that in our area, in the month of September, a typical day can start with torrential rain, by the middle of the day the sun can be cracking the pavements and by night time, there can be a widespread ground frost. It is these conditions that make it nearly impossible to prevent our birds from moulting in the month of September. There is nothing more frustrating than to work on something for 3 months only for it to fall apart the last few weeks before the big event as a result of something you have no control over whatsoever.

However, this issue has always left me with a conflict of interest. On the one hand, as an exhibitor at the Club Show, I have faced the difficulties and disappointments outlined above. On the other hand, as an officer of the show in my role as Assistant Show Manager I much prefer the September date. This is simply because when I set off on a Friday morning to go and help set up the show, it is relatively light and there are usually no serious frost conditions. On the way back on the Sunday, it is daylight for 90% of my journey and again, there are usually no adverse weather conditions to deal with. This attitude is however an entirely selfish one. Let us not forget that the Club Show is all about the birds. It's about making sure that the finest budgerigars in the country are all there and in the best condition possible so as to have a genuine contest for the top prize. In my experience, the September date has prevented this from occurring and I am sure has contributed to the decline in benched birds in the last few years.

Taking everything into account, I am sure that the General Council have made the right decision for all of the right reasons.