



Random Thoughts on Nest Boxes

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I find the range of nest boxes available at most bird dealers are quite good. There are many modifications you can use to help your breeding results. I find that many of my [Neophemas](#) do better if I attach a small piece of natural hollow log instead of the wooden spout of a square hole or an open hole. [Golden-shoulders](#) and [Hooded](#) in particular like these as well. As well for these birds, some people are using some form of supplementary heating. Either a light globe attached to the side of the nest box or a thermostat heated box. This helps to keep the young warm as they prefer to breed in winter and the hens stop brooding the young at a very early age. Unless you have the supplementary heat many young will die. There are probably other species where we should consider providing heating as well.



For [Psephotus](#) parrots, I give them a choice of boxes or logs. I much prefer them to use a box if they will. [Quarrions](#) do quite well in the same medium sized boxes.

The [Rosellas](#) I find difficult to get them to go into boxes. They prefer logs. If they do use a box it is one of the larger ones available. [Indian Ringnecks](#) will also use the larger sizes.

One word of warning. If you use boxes made of particle board, make sure it is not brand new. The board is made with a [Formaldehyde](#) glue. I have a friend who was moving birds interstate with new carry cases and all the birds were dead on arrival. When they traced back the problem it was the new particle board in these boxes which let off the Formalin gas and this killed the birds. The same can apply to nest boxes. I usually leave them for a few weeks before I hang them up in the aviary.

My [Lorikeets](#) seem to prefer a smaller box to any of the larger ones.

In the larger nest boxes a lot of people use a small wire ladder attached to the inside so that the hens can climb up and down. I do it but find that it is rarely necessary. If you do use the wire ladders, be sure to watch that they don't come loose or the birds may be trapped inside.

With birds such as Quarrion and [Peach-faced Lovebirds](#) which nest all year, I suggest that the boxes be removed once a year. They should be burnt and the birds given new ones. If they have had three or four nests in that box, you just can't clean them out properly. In other birds, I just clean them out between nests, put new shavings in the bottom and spray them with an insecticide - usually Coopex as it is completely harmless to the birds but really knocks the red mite around. You really need to keep an eye out for the red mite in summer, particularly if the weather is quite humid. They seem to come from nowhere and you can lose nests of young overnight.

For nesting material, I use shavings. I think they are cleaner and I don't like damp peat moss type things in there. I don't put soil in because it is giving you an ideal environment for fungal infections. George Smith, when he was here for the convention in Melbourne, was saying he uses nothing at all in his nest boxes. He maintains that in the wild most birds, as with most birds in Europe, are more domesticated than ours especially the Australian parrots they have in Britain. He is just using bare floor boards and is very successful.

As far as the position of the box in the aviary, I don't think there are hard and fast rules as there is tremendous variation. I think it is a good idea to give them a choice. John Raymond talks about left and right handed Quarrions. He has some pairs that nest in the left side of the aviary if the box is hanging on that side. If you put the box on the right-hand side they won't even look at it and vice versa. The only way you will discover this is to give them variation and choice.

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