



Button Quail

Origin

Button quail originally came from China. The little guys we see now come from US breeders. Although we originally considered them more of a novelty bird or even a clean up bird in finch cages, there seems to be quite an interest in them around the country. We pretty much kept ours like low rider doves. We waited until this late date to write a page on them because we sold so few of them. Then one of our customers started talking them up, so we decided to make more button quail information available.

Cage Substrate

If you have a herd of them, you'll want to keep them over a mixture of small wood chips (preferably Aspen) and sand to keep their feet free of accretions (look it up). Since we change their reading material daily, accretions don't seem to be a problem. If your button quail do accumulate accretions, you can get rid of them by soaking their feet in warm water.

Water

Button quail need a shallow water bowl - especially smaller button quail. Adding marbles supposedly increases the amount of water they drink. The marbles (more of them) keep the chicks from falling and drowning.

Lighting

Full spectrum always works best. If you want high egg production. Give them 14 hours of light per day.

Feather Picking

Crowding leads to feather picking. The feather picking is mostly a nuisance it makes them unsightly. Severe feather picking can even lead to death - not common but keep your eyes open. De-feathered button quails are no longer cute as a button.

Button Quail Food

Depends on the day. Sometimes they get parakeet food. Other days they get finch food. The pelleted finch foods are probably best. Many commercial breeders feed turkey mash or turkey crumble. The crumble needs to be ground to the right/bite size. You soon learn to just put a little food in the bowl. They're food strewers. They tend to run thru the food when excited (which is most of the time).

Supplements

Button quail hens are little egg machines. You will need to give yours extra calcium. You can add it to their food, give them a little dish of calcium chips, or just leave a calcium block in their cage. Ordinarily, you'd want to add vitamin D3 to help them utilize their calcium. If you keep them under full spectrum lights, you won't need the D3.

Treats

Like any birds that scratch in the dirt for a living, button quails like insects and worms.

Mealworms in their food bowl are probably easiest. They like crickets also, but you have to pull crickets' back legs off or you'll be chasing them all over the house. You can also find canned insects. They don't necessarily need live insects. Like most birds, they also enjoy a bit of boiled egg once in a while.

Fruits & Vegetables

Give them some but not a lot. If you think of them as mini-chickens, you know they'll probably try anything you give them. Our chickens loved table scraps. They'd even clean up watermelon rinds. Just give them this stuff in small quantities.

Grit

They don't really need it. Lots of pros recommend small chicken grit and oyster shell chips because button quail don't husk their seeds. They'll probably eat rocks but they don't need them. They probably also ingest some of the sand in their sand bath.

Sand Bath

Ever see sparrows fluttering in the sand and dust in the gutter? Button quail enjoy a good sand bath also. Put a high rimmed container of sand in there and they'll find it. The high rim helps keep the sand in.