



Healthy Home

Proper Cage for Your Bird

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Environment Tips

- Clean, safe cage
- Sleep cage
- Various perches
- Toy choices
- Secure but not isolated location
- Stable comfortable climate
- Clean, smoke-free air
- Moderate humidity
- Regular bathing
- Avoid toxin exposure

Accidental injuries are some of the most common reasons for birds to require veterinary care. Broken nails, feathers or even bones can occur as a result of unsafe cages, lack of supervision, or from panic attacks of the bird. For this reason it is in a pet bird's interest to keep them caged when no one can supervise.

Safe cages have sturdy construction of non-toxic materials and are generally very basic in shape. Ornamental curls and other areas where bars converge are sites where toes can become trapped, leading to injury. The cage door should have a mechanism that is easy for the owner to open, but impossible for the bird to open.

A removable tray should be present at the bottom of the cage to allow easy cleanup, and there should be a grate to prevent birds from eating contaminated food that has been dropped to the bottom. The grate should be removable also, to allow easy cleaning.

Cages should be as large as possible to allow activity. Several perches of various sizes, shapes, and textures to allow for foot comfort. A few toys should be present as well, and these can be changed regularly to keep up interest.

It is strongly recommended that birds have a second, smaller cage that is used only for sleeping. This cage is very simplistic and need not have toys or even



A safe cage can save a bird's life.

a food dish. A water bowl and a comfortable perch are all that is necessary. This cage should be in a dark, quiet room so the bird can get plenty of uninterrupted sleep time.

Cleaning the Cage

Bacterial and fungal infections are common in pet birds. Many of these diseases are the result of poor sanitation, contaminated food or water, or an immune system weakened by stress, poor nutrition, or other diseases. To try and avoid

these diseases, proper hygiene should be practiced. Cage trays should be lined with paper which is changed daily. Food and water dishes should be washed at least daily. Fresh foods should be left in the dish for only a few hours.

Perches should be placed such that droppings will not hit objects below, and should be cleaned at least weekly.

Cage grates should be washed twice weekly.

Cage Location



Parrots should be placed where they can interact as a member of the family

As social creatures, parrots should be placed where they can interact as a member of the family. A living room or family room is usually a good location for the primary daytime cage.

Ideally the cage should sit in a corner where the bird can view the activity in the room without feeling exposed. Parrots are prey species and always are on the lookout for danger. Having a wall behind can give a bit of security. While the ability to look out of windows and into

other rooms is beneficial, a parrot should be able to retreat from the watchful glare of the world.

Locating the cage where people may appear from nowhere can lead to constant startling as well. Cages should be placed facing doors and stairways rather than next to them so that they can see approaching people from a distance first.

It is best if there is a low level of sound in the area of a cage.

In the jungles of the world, the only time it is quiet is when someone is stalking. A low level of sound will decrease sensitivity to everyday sounds like the heat or air conditioning kicking on. Leaving a radio on is a simple means of providing this “white noise”.

Perches

Birds spend 24/7 on their feet! That can get pretty tiring if the perch is the same all of the time.

Perches should be provided in a variety of diameters, shapes, textures, and sizes. All should be reasonable for the bird, but the greater the variety the better. Rather than having exces-

sive numbers of perches in the cage, keep a few and then change them every week or so. This allows proper cleaning of perches and also gives the feet a break.

Wooden dowels are not the only choice. Natural branches with bark, rope perches, textured plastic perches, or even

concrete perches can be used.

Concrete perches, and sandpaper perch covers should be used carefully. In addition to wearing down nails and beaks, they can wear down the skin on the sole of the feet. They should only be used in conjunction with other perches.

“Wooden dowels are not the only choice. Natural branches with bark, rope perches, textured plastic perches, or even concrete perches can be used.”

Toys

There are four basic toy types.

- Chewing toys
- Foot toys
- Climbing toys
- Puzzle toys

Some toys can fit into more than one category.

Birds should have at least one of each type of toy available. Toys should be changed on a regular basis to keep up interest. Some toys can be simple disposable objects like crumple paper.

There are some birds that don't know how to play with toys.

These birds need to be taught to play. Rather than introducing toys into the cage for these birds, play with the bird outside of the cage using the toy. Once they show interest in the toy, it can be introduced to the cage.



Toys can be disposable objects like paper

Environmental Stresses

Birds have an undeserved reputation for being delicate animals. Many times an illness is thought to have come on suddenly and as a result of a draft or chill. Actually, these birds have been sick for months but has not shown symptoms until stressed.

Although the word stress often conjures up pictures of Maalox drinking Wall Street executives, stress can come in many forms. Stress is a physiological response to adverse physical or

psychological stimuli. Certain hormones are produced to prepare the body to deal with the situation. However, these responses are at the expense of immune function.

Physical conditions that lead to stress in birds include rapid temperature changes, low humidity, poor nutrition, overcrowding, inadequate sleep, molting, reproduction, or disease.

Stressful psychological condi-

tions include isolation, fear, and sexual frustration.

Some simple measures:

- *House birds singly*
- *Socialize birds*
- *Feed balanced diet*
- *Avoid rapid temperature changes*
- *Keep adequate humidity*
- *Keep a schedule*
- *Provide stimulation*



Stress can affect your bird's health.

Bird Skin Care

Many birds lack the luster that the feathers should have. Very often this is due to poor nutrition. Most of the birds we see are on unbalanced diets. This is a contributing factor in all of the diseases we see.

The skin provides a window to the overall health of the bird. If they look dull, frayed, or flaky,

their internal structures may also have problems.

In addition to a healthy diet, most birds require periodic bathing. This cleans the feathers and encourages normal preening. Baths can be given in a variety of ways. Some birds bathe in a dish, some like to be misted or share a shower with

the owner. Use only water for bathing.

Mite protectors or sprays are not necessary and could be harmful. Any other product for the skin should be checked by our vets before using. Some things leave an oily residue on the feathers.



"Use only water for bathing...Some things leave an oily residue on the feathers."

Smoking: Bad for You and Your Bird

Cigarette smoke is a serious toxin. The effects on the health of smokers are well documented and now we are seeing that even second hand smoke is very harmful.

Birds have extremely efficient respiratory systems that will take in more air from the room

and extract oxygen very effectively. Unfortunately, it also extracts toxins from the air. A bird will take in about 20 times the amount of toxin from the air as an equivalent sized mammal.

Birds that are exposed to second hand smoke often have red irritated eyes and throats, respi-

ratory wheezes, and black speckled lungs.

If you must smoke, do it away from your bird.



If you must smoke do it away from your bird.



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All Creatures Animal Hospital is dedicated to providing progressive medicine in a caring environment for pets of all species. Through preventative medicine, client education, professional development of our staff, and advanced medical and surgical techniques, we hope to foster a strong and lasting bond with clients and their pets.



Toxicosis

Toxicosis is defined as disease caused by exposure to poisonous agents. The types of diseases produced by toxins are as numerous as the types of poisons. There are, however, some generalizations that may help avoid this problem or save a bird with this problem.

Prevention: Always keep birds confined to a cage when not supervised. Use only professionally made cages or those made of non-toxic materials. A veterinarian or reputable pet store will be able to help you with this. Check for toxic materials or plants near the bird's cage and remove them. Keep cage away from sources of toxic fumes (paint, cooking fumes, natural gas). Make sure no parts of the oven are coated with Teflon or other non stick surfaces, and that any Teflon cookware is not overheated. Do not feed low quality grains (such

as wild bird seed) to birds as they may have mold toxins. Wash all fresh foods thoroughly before feeding to remove any pesticides (or disinfectants if used for sanitizing the food). Lastly, sick birds should be treated only by veterinarians experienced in treating birds. Over the counter remedies are not only ineffective, but may also be toxic.

Recognition: Toxicosis should be suspected in any bird that is suddenly seriously ill. This is especially true if the bird had not been confined in a safe environment in the past several hours. (Chronic poisoning can also occur over a long period of time and show up suddenly) Immediate veterinary attention should be sought. Also a source of toxins should be searched for. Lead and other heavy metals, which account for a large percentage of poisonings seen, may cause sei-

zures, green watery urine, or in Amazons, red urine. While these signs may be seen in other conditions, they all need immediate veterinary care. Sudden death may occur in birds exposed to toxic fumes, especially overheated Teflon.

Treatment: It is dangerous to delay veterinary attention, so home treatment is not advised. However, if poisoning is suspected, two things will help the bird in the mean time. First identify the source. This will help the veterinarian use the best treatment more quickly. Second stop exposure. Many birds have been saved by simply removing them from a home where toxic fumes have accumulated.

If you have questions about a particular substance, we can give you more information.



Make sure your bird has access only to safe items.