

Common Avian Toxins

Toxic by Ingestion

- Lead (lead shot, galvanized wire, lead paint, solder, linoleum, foil from champagne or wine bottles, lead weights, stained glass, Tiffany lamps, batteries, costume jewelry, mirror backs, and bird toys with lead weights)
- Zinc (galvanized containers or mesh, hardware cloth, staples, galvanized nails, fertilizers, Desenex cream, zinc pyrithione shampoos, zinc oxide, and pennies post 1982)
- Copper (wire and pennies pre 1982)
- Iron (cast iron feeding bowls)
- Pesticides, Rodenticides, & Insecticides (organophosphates & carbamates)
- Moth balls and mite protectors
- Non-stick surfaces on cooking pans, irons and ironing board covers (Teflon-like coating)
- Nicotine

Toxic by Inhalation:

- Ammonia & strong bleach
- Automobile exhaust
- Bug bombs, pesticide strips & sprays
- Burning food & cooking oils
- Cleaners (disinfectants, deodorizers, polish, etc)
- Fluoropolymers from spray starch
- Glues, paints, nail polish, & nail polish remover
- Hair permanents, hair color, & hair spray
- Hair dryer fumes (from new hair dryers)
- Leaded gasoline fumes
- Non-stick cooking surfaces (pots, pans, & irons)
- Mothballs (naphthalene, paradichlorobenzene)
- Self-cleaning ovens
- Smoke (tobacco or other)

This is not a complete list! If you have any questions regarding other possible toxins please ask your veterinarian for further information.

Behavior & Socialization

Take care to act as a flock member & leader to your bird, NOT a mate. Birds are easily confused on this issue and many develop serious behavioral disorders including aggression, screaming, separation anxiety, inappropriate egg-laying, feather picking or self-mutilation.

Parrots benefit from regular “Flock interactive behavior” or a “Good Citizen Program.” Examples are 5-minute “birdie burrito” sessions, step-up step-down and stay exercises, & positive reinforcement (praise, pet, or treat). We want the bird to be used to responding to your requests. A “nothing in life is free” approach can work well – ie the parrot does not get what they want until they do what you want first. The book Birds for Dummies has simple exercises that you can follow.

Cuddling is NOT a normal bird behavior EXCEPT when copulating. Minimize cuddling with your bird, or petting him around his abdomen or rump. Do not let your parrot sit on your shoulder as this is a dominant position. Instead, train your parrot to sit on a nearby perch so that they can still hang out with you.

Daily interaction and foraging is vital to your bird’s mental health.

1. Make sure that multiple people in your home & visitors handle your bird as often as possible.
2. Have an area outside or on top of the bird’s cage where they can perch safely & interact with you outside of the cage with supervision.
3. Prevent boredom with a variety of toys that you rotate in & out of the cage every few days.
4. Leaving the radio, a tape of phrases you want your bird to learn, or the TV on while you are away from the house gives your bird something to stimulate him while you are gone.
5. Taking your parrot into the shower with you or letting them play in the sink 3-4 times per week is great enrichment for them.

Parrot Care



There many things to consider when taking on a parrot as a pet. At Oceanside Animal Hospital, we strive to address all of your questions & concerns and provide you with the information you need to provide a safe, healthy home environment for your pet.

This pamphlet contains information about:

- Housing
- Diet
- Foraging
- Veterinary Care
- Common Toxins
- Behavior & Socialization



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Housing

- Enclosures should be as large as possible, with the bird able to fully extend its wings and flap without touching the sides of the enclosure
- Enclosure should be clean, secure, safe and constructed of durable, non-toxic materials, with varied perches such as Polly's Pet Perches
- Avoid placing perches directly over food or water to prevent contamination
- Access to natural light is preferred, but avoid drafty areas.
- Birds outside of cages need constant supervision to avoid access to other pets, small children, and any household toxins
- Cage bottoms are best covered with paper towels or newspaper.
- Cage litters are not recommended because they can harbor fungal /mold spores and toxins
- Best location is typically in a common room (not the kitchen).
- Feed dishes are best located so that the bird can stand on a perch and lean into the dish rather than "standing on his head."
- Water bottles are recommended over bowls due to the decreased fecal contamination.
- Perches are best almost oversized and oval for daytime use, especially for larger or overweight birds. Night perches should be smaller in diameter for better grip while asleep. Perches are best made of wood and replaced at regular intervals. Rope perches are useful but should be washed (delicate washer cycle) weekly. Avoid plastic, metal, or sand-paper covered perches.
- The minimum home temperature should be 65 degrees F. Covering cages is not recommended but rather put the bird in a dark, quiet room (preferably not a human's bedroom). Smaller "night" cages with the smaller perches work well for this.

Diet

- Seed based or homemade people food diets are incomplete for birds and generally cause malnutrition. Formulated (pellet) diets ensure that they will have a balanced diet without nutritional deficits or excesses in fat, etc.
- Birds need fresh, specifically formulated diets , such as Harrison's, Roudybush, or Zupreem diets (pellets) as 60-80% of the entire diet
- PLEASE DO NOT offer a mixture of seeds & pellets together as birds WILL pick out the junk food (the seeds) and leave the nutritious pellets behind. We advise feeding ONLY PELLETS in the cage and use ALL other foods as treats, for training, and for foraging.
- Treats should be limited to only 5% of the diet; ORGANIC dark green vegetables or fruits (sweet potatoes, carrots, pumpkin, winter squash, broccoli, parsley, spinach, mango, or papaya) can be 10-30% of diet
- South American fruits like mango & papaya are more nutritious than North American fruits
- Try to stay away from starches like white potatoes as they are mostly empty calories
- Clean, fresh water should be provided daily
- DO NOT FEED YOUR BIRD CHOCOLATE, RAW PINEAPPLE or TOMATO, (cooked tomatoes are ok), AVOCADO OR FOODS WITH CAFFEINE.

Foraging

In the wild, birds spend 60-80% of their day foraging or looking for food. In captivity where their food is given in a bowl, birds often experience boredom and develop unwanted behaviors such as feather picking. The best way to help prevent these things is to teach your bird how to forage. Do this gradually and do not expect your bird to be able to work a foraging toy right away. The best reference and instructions for this are found in "Captive

Foraging *(continued)*

- Foraging" a DVD by Scott Echols. Basic principles to get you started are as follows:
- The only food allowed in the cage is pelleted food. All other treats & supplements are given via foraging – this increases the bird's drive to forage and find their treat.
 - In the cage: Start simply by laying a piece of paper over the bowl. Do this daily for a few days then use an elastic to secure the paper over the bowl. Once they can remove the paper, increase the number of sheets of paper.
 - Use crimped Dixie cups to hide treats or stuff plastic drinking straws with treats
 - Build a foraging tree on which you can place treats in different hide spots and containers

Veterinary Care

Preventive Care

- Bi-annual physical examinations
- Fecal examinations
- Vaccination for Polyomavirus if in a flock
- Blood work annually for adults
- Wing & nail trimming every 3-6 mths
- Initial testing for Psittacosis, PBFD, & Polyoma if introducing into flock
- Micro-chipping

Common Disorders of Chicks:

- Crop disorders/burns
- Trauma
- Foreign body aspiration
- Hypothermia
- Fungal, bacterial, and viral infections
- Candida yeast infection

Common Disorders of Adults:

- Reproductive disorders
- Obesity
- Respiratory diseases
- Liver disease
- Calcium deficiency
- Parasites
- Fungal, viral, and bacterial infections
- Behavior – feather picking, screaming, aggression, biting