


Avian Module 2: History Taking

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Congo African grey parrot
<http://www.singing-wings-aviary.com>

Objectives

1. Appreciate why taking a detailed history is so important in avian medicine
2. List the general categories of information that should form a complete history
3. Describe the key management factors for husbandry of pet birds

A Full History is Crucial

- Many problems seen in avian patients still originate in issues with husbandry (including nutrition) and behaviour, so taking a complete history is crucial to unravelling many problems
- Using standardized forms helps ensure that all the relevant topics are covered
 - One example is available from the Association of Avian Veterinarians



OVC New Bird History Form

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH
Ontario Veterinary College
Veterinary Teaching Hospital

AVIAN HISTORY: New Visit
OVC VTH Avian/Exotic Service

For all new patients or those not seen within the past 12 months

A. Why did you choose us to provide the veterinary care for your bird?

B. GENERAL INFORMATION:

1. How long have you had this bird? _____

2. How do you know the age of your bird? _____

3. This bird was: Captive Bred Wild-caught I don't know

4. The bird was obtained from:
Pet Store/Other Commercial Source Breeder Private Party Other

Please Specify: _____

Please Insert With Patient Card

Components of a Complete History

1. Current problem - introduction
2. Signalment
3. Source of bird
4. Management
5. Behaviour with owner
6. Previous medical issues and full discussion of current problem

1. Current Problem

- The first and sometimes only thing on the owner's mind is usually the current problem

BUT

- You often need the background information to put things into perspective.


2. Signalment

- What kind of bird is it?
 - There are different disease predispositions as well as different behavioural patterns
- How old is the bird?
- What gender is the bird?

Age – birds do not show their age

- Some species of birds have changes in feather colour that indicate their age for the first few years, but for most, once the first full set of feathers are in, age cannot be determined
- Birds reach their full size at about the time they are fully feathered

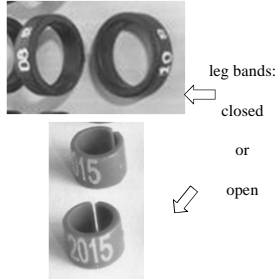
Age – birds do not show their age



- Rose breasted cockatoo / galah - this galah is only 9 weeks old but is full size and fully feathered.
- Owners may not know the age of an adult bird, especially if it has been rehomed before they acquired it.

http://www.birdbands.com

Age – birds do not show their age



leg bands:

closed


or

open


- Some birds have leg bands
- A closed leg band can only be put on a young bird while its foot is small, these bands often have the breeder's ID and a date of birth for the bird
- Open bands can be put on at any time

http://www.birdbands.com

Sex Determination – or often their gender

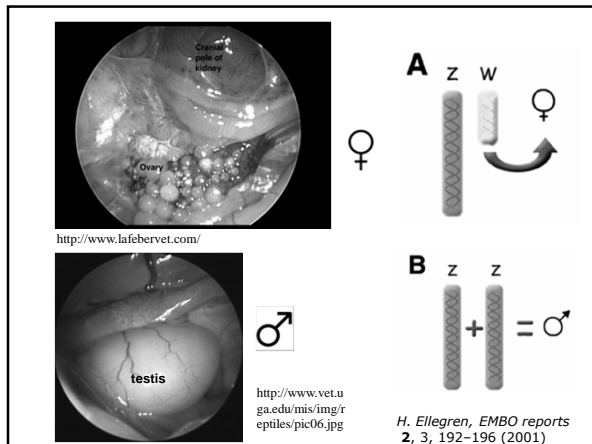


- Most pet avian species are not sexually dimorphic
- Endoscopic visualization of the gonads or DNA/chromosome assessment from a blood sample are used to identify the gender of a bird accurately.



The eclectus parrot is an exception to this rule – male and female are VERY different.

female – male



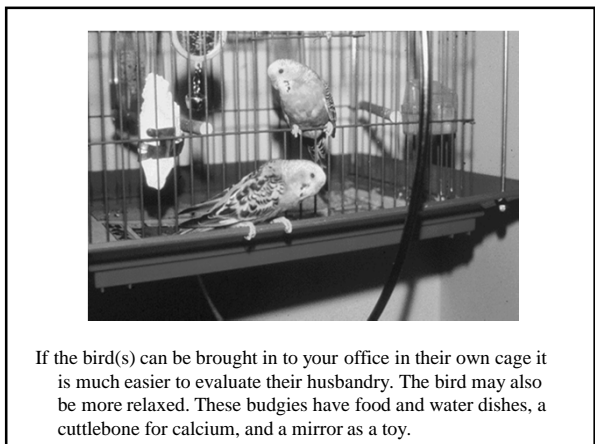
- How would you know FOR SURE from the history that a bird is a female?

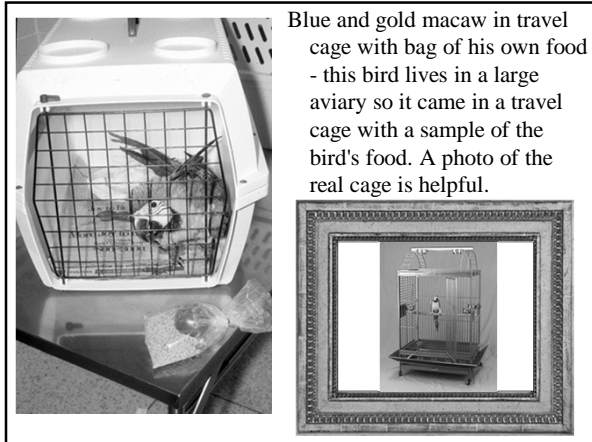
3. Source of Bird

- Fewer and fewer pet birds come directly from the wild, but this is good to know
- If a bird has been rehomed once or more times, it may well be because of behavioural issues
- Captive bred, hand raised parrots generally make the best pets

4. Management

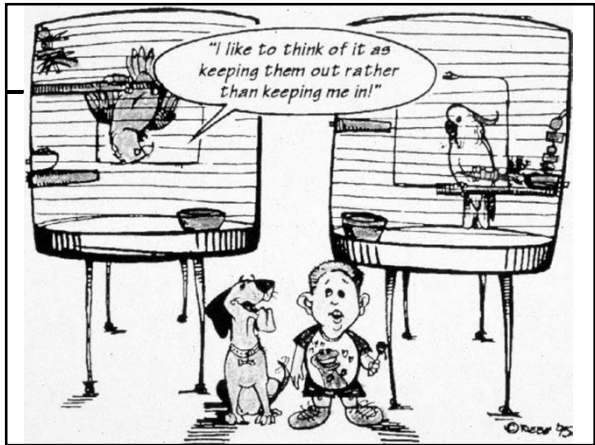
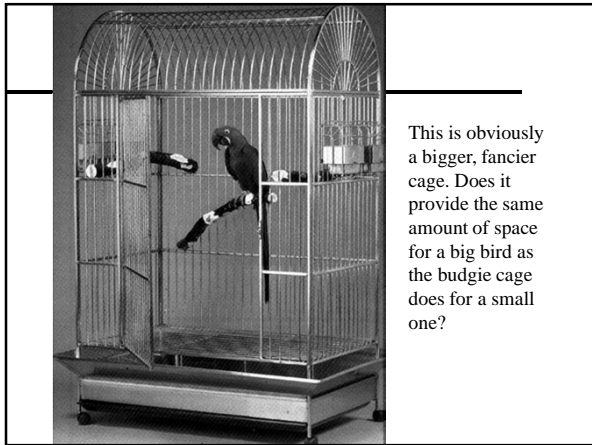
- You need to know all about the bird's lifestyle
 - caging
 - nutrition
 - exercise
 - degree of supervision – is the bird ever free in the house?





Caging

- The cage must suit the size and nature of the patient.
- Should not be made of /with zinc
- A cage like this is of suitable size for a small bird, and has many toys for entertainment.
- This bird can stretch out fully and use several levels of the cage.



Sleep

Most pet birds are tropical – like toddlers they behave best with 10+ hrs of darkness and sleep.

IS YOUR BIRD GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP?
 All pet birds need 12 HOURS of sleep each night to maintain their GOOD HEALTH!
 The right cage cover will ensure that your bird will sleep BETTER and LONGER.
 We custom make cage covers to FIT ALL cages. Call now to place your order on our safe, quality cage covers.
 by YANN'S OF LA
 9741 Ross 1301 - Suite 1, LA 76179
 504-669-3416 Visit our website at www.yannsofla.com
 These covers are shown on Avian Aquatics cages.

<http://www.ams-diabetic.com/fruitveg.jpg>

http://farm.static.flickr.com/3646/3613413061_6e94a1808.jpg

http://farm.static.flickr.com/2201/202725897_940f1d8ee.jpg

Nutrition


- Almost nothing we feed a captive pet bird is “natural” for their species
- Commercial diets continue to improve and become more tailored to individual groups of birds and to different stages in life
- Many “fresh” fruit and vegetables are a healthy addition to a commercial diet

Pelleted Food: >75% of Diet



<p><u>Benefits:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ nutritionally complete ▪ stores well ▪ promotes health ▪ avoids “seed junkies ” 	<p><u>Owner Concerns:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ preservatives, colours ▪ lack of foraging ▪ “not natural” ▪ picky eaters
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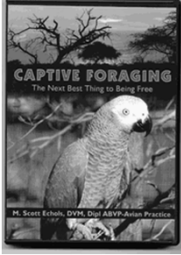
Nutritional Problems

- high fat diets – oil seeds
 - obesity
 - atherosclerosis
 - vitamin A deficiency
 - calcium deficiency
- iodine deficiency from seeds
 - goitre in budgies
- treats
 - quality and portion size



- In the wild, birds spend a lot of time finding food.
- Encouraging foraging helps pass the time in captivity.







What do parrots do all day?

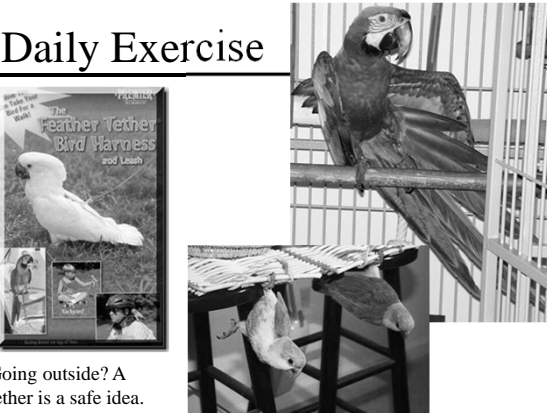
Captivity greatly reduces the options, and parrots are intelligent, social, and inquisitive

Natural Parrot Behaviors



- ✧ foraging & feeding
- ✧ flying
- ✧ socializing (flock)
- ✧ vocalizing
- ✧ preening
- ✧ breeding (bonding)
- ✧ avoiding predators
- ✧ playing
- ✧ resting/sleeping


Daily Exercise




Going outside? A tether is a safe idea.

Flying ?

- Excellent exercise
- Builds independence
- Risk of trauma
- Risk of flying away
- Recommended for fledglings

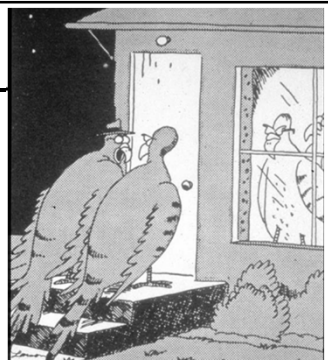


Exercise under Supervision




- Extremely important!
- Free-ranging birds, flighted or not, can get into all sorts of things.
- Not to mention what they can do to the house!

What do parrots do for fun?



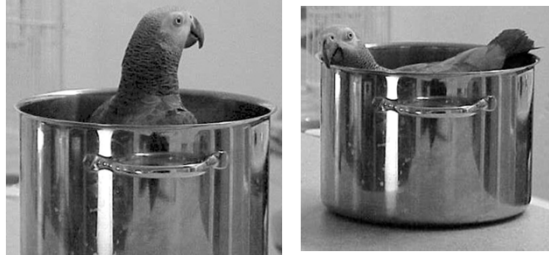
"Well, here we go, another exciting evening at the Murdocks', all of us sitting around going, 'Hello my name is so-and-so. ... What's your name? ... wanna cracker? Hello, my name is so-and-so.'"

Socialization

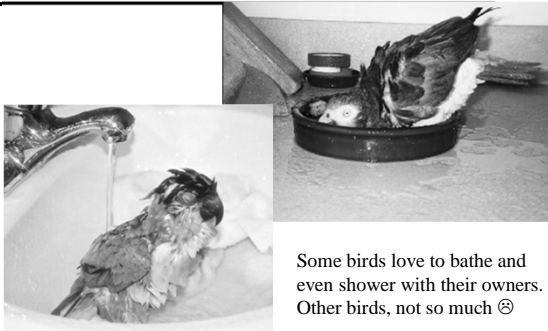


Out-of-cage time with the flock! But remember – not all birds automatically like each other!

Play Time



Bath Time



Some birds love to bathe and even shower with their owners. Other birds, not so much ☹️

Birds, just want to have fun...



<http://www.coastalbreezenews.com/2010/10/07/qa-with-simba-2/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7IZmRnAo6s>



Most parrots love music!

A socially well adjusted parrot is:

- Secure in its position in the “flock”
 - The “flock” might be you and your other household pets
- Safe from predators
- Able to deal with change
- Not bored

5. Behaviour with Owner

- ❖ Does the bird behave nicely when asked, or does it’s behaviour indicate “you aren’t the boss of me”.
- ❖ Birds can consider the owner to be their mate, sometimes without the owner being aware of this.



Two blue and gold macaws on their owner's shoulders – is this bird biting, or just keeping it’s balance while it flaps its wings,

6. and finally..

- Previous medical issues and treatment
- Full description of current problem.

Where to Learn More

- There is a huge amount of resource material on pet bird care and behaviour
- Books, magazines, videos
- The internet (so many Youtube videos!)
- National and local avicultural groups and symposia
- Professional avian behavioural consultants