



Medical Center For Birds

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Getting To Know Your Bird

Most parrot species spend their time during the day performing daily maintenance behaviors including foraging, social interaction, and feather care. The details of these behaviors and the amount of time needed daily for them vary depending on the species, the season, and the living situation that the bird(s) are in. These behaviors are crucial for survival for most parrots in their natural habitats and are essential for behavioral and mental well-being for parrots in a companion setting. Ideally, a healthy balance of these three categories of maintenance behaviors should be maintained for companion parrots. Feather care is at least in part an instinctual set of behaviors that are predominately built-in and usually require little modification in normal circumstances. Foraging, or searching for food, is a very important behavior that many parrots will need your help in order to learn and become proficient at. Foraging may include solving puzzle toys and chewing up toys to obtain food. It is important to enhance and build on these types of activities in order to help balance their overall daily maintenance/activity schedules. Generally, most birds are very social animals and will love to spend time, play, and eat with you! Providing social interaction for your bird is key for keeping them happy and healthy. While you might be able to find some guidelines on these worksheets as well as other sources, over time you will find what boundaries and routines work best for you and your flock.

Giving your bird “homework” will be very helpful in guiding your bird towards a healthier and happier interactive lifestyle with you in your home. The three-way balance between foraging activities, social interaction, and feather care is very important for behavioral and mental well-being for most birds. The well-trained and adapted pet bird is commonly less stressed, happier, better nourished, and less likely to develop illness.

In an imbalanced situation with specific abnormal behaviors in one of these areas, behavioral guidance is generally oriented towards re-establishing a true balance between these categories again. Should there be abnormal feather care (excessive grooming, feather picking), generally, we often work to enhance the other two points of the above triangle, social interaction and foraging. Should there be abnormal social interactive skills or behaviors, work would be more focused on enhancement of feather care and foraging behavior activities. Your veterinarian can help you with the details and make a plan to address any concerns you have.