

FIRST AID

FOR COMPANION BIRDS

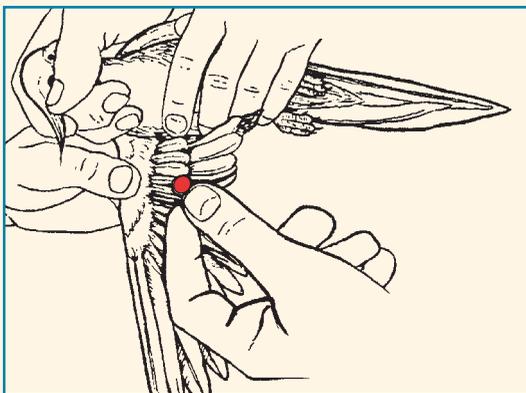


A Quick Reference Guide for Emergency Care

Before an emergency occurs, it is important to establish a relationship with an avian veterinarian so you will have medical attention available to you when needed. Many veterinarians do not see emergencies without a prior client relationship. Alternatively, you might seek an emergency clinic that is willing to see birds.

First Aid for a Bleeding Feather

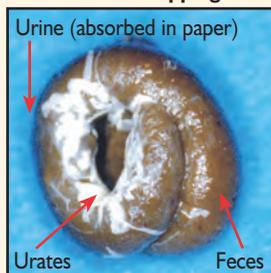
Proper restraint is best achieved by two people. The bleeding feather is identified by cleaning the area with a small amount of warm water or hydrogen peroxide. A small amount of fine white flour or cornstarch may be patted onto the area to absorb the blood and create a "dough ball." If followed by firm pressure at the site for a few minutes, this technique alone often stops the bleeding. The broken section may be trimmed later. If bleeding persists, contact your avian veterinarian.



How to Evaluate Your Bird's Droppings

Clean white paper or other smooth surfaces may be used to collect the droppings. The normal appearance of the feces is usually soft and brown when the bird is eating a formulated diet but may be abnormally dry and black, yellow or green with a seed diet. The owner should consider the dietary contents

Normal Droppings



when evaluating abnormal coloring of the feces. Some pelleted diets that have been artificially colored will impart an orange, red or other color to the feces, and some fruits (e.g., blueberries) may affect the output.

The normally clear urine may be increased in amount due to excess consumption of fruits and vegetables. Normal urates are creamy white waste from the kidneys and are often suspended in the liquid urine or are "wrapped around" the feces.

Any color change in the urates is abnormal. A sick bird may show a change in the volume, color, consistency or frequency of droppings. Feces from egg-laying females, baby birds on hand-feeding formulas and the first void of the morning may be larger than normal, and urine output may increase when the bird is nervous or ill.

Short-term Home Care of Sick or Injured Birds

A warm environment (85-90°F [29-32°C]) is necessary for most birds that are sick or injured. This is especially true for juvenile or geriatric birds, which are more vulnerable to rapid debilitation. Birds that are sick and trying to conserve body heat will appear fluffed. Many commercial enclosures and incubators are available with heating systems. Alternatively, heat may be provided to an enclosure covered with plastic wrap by a hot water bottle, a well insulated heating pad or a 75-100 watt light bulb. Birds receiving supplemental heat from any source should be carefully monitored to prevent overheating. The temperature is too hot if the bird starts breathing rapidly (panting) and holds its wings out away from its body.

A sick bird is usually not interested in eating, but food and water containers should be easily accessible with a minimal expenditure of energy. Sick birds that are too weak to perch or those with leg fractures or paralysis may be placed on thick paper towels or nonwoven towels on the bottom of an enclosure. Or for support on all sides, the bird may be placed in the middle of a circle created with a rolled-up towel.

Small birds become debilitated faster than larger birds. A few drops of a warm, strong coffee solution with a high concentration of sugar may be administered by eyedropper to provide a burst of energy to a weak bird until it can be taken to the veterinarian. Gatorade,® Pedialyte® or Tyrode's solution may also be given to reduce dehydration. Care must be exercised, especially by an inexperienced owner, when assisting sick birds as they may be more prone to aspiration.

Do not give pet shop medications, creams or ointments to the bird. Only give antibiotics prescribed by a veterinarian.

"An Ounce of Prevention..."

The most important factor in reducing the number of home emergencies with companion birds is for owners to be well educated about the husbandry needs of the species in their care. Specifically, proper nutrition significantly reduces the medical attention required for feathers, skin, behavior, gastrointestinal disorders, bleeding, obesity, respiratory disorders, reproductive problems and some eye conditions.

Any new birds should be carefully evaluated before purchase, examined by a veterinarian and appropriately quarantined in the home for at least 45 days before contact with existing birds. Initial preventive treatment may be needed, and periodic health checks by your veterinarian are recommended.

Avoid: unsupervised freedom, sources of lead, zinc, oils, ointments, cigarette smoke, insecticides, contact with other animals and children, flimsy or improperly constructed toys, overheated nonstick-coated utensils, plug-in air fresheners, heavily-scented candles and overuse of disinfectants.

EMERGENCY FIRST AID



- A** Contact a veterinarian immediately! Use first aid only until bird can be seen.
- B** Conditions may briefly respond to first aid, but a veterinarian should be contacted immediately.
- C** Try these first aid suggestions. If results are not immediately seen, contact a veterinarian.

| ! PROBLEM/SIGNS | | POSSIBLE CAUSES | FIRST AID MEASURES |
|-----------------|--|---|---|
| A | Cloacal (rectal) prolapse | Mass in cloaca; egg-binding; tumor; papillomatosis; malnutrition; excessive sexual stimulation. | Call veterinarian immediately. |
| A | Laying on cage floor, weak | Head trauma; toxin ingestion; overheating; central nervous system infection; stroke; tumor; severe metabolic disease. | For head trauma, keep cool (not hot or cold). See "Short-term Home Care" on reverse side until veterinarian can be seen. |
| A | Limb – loss of use, paralysis | Leg: paralysis; soft tissue trauma; fractures; tumors; egg-binding; gout; metal toxicities. Wing: soft tissue trauma; bony trauma; heavy metal toxicity. | Remove perches; provide quiet, warm environment (85-90°F [29-32°C]). For broken wing, can slip a snug (not tight) stocking over the body (with the toe cut out for the bird's head). |
| A | Poisoning | Ingested: pesticides; disinfectants; heavy metals (tire balances, curtain weights, solder, wine bottle foil, leaded glass, galvanized wire); some plants; cigarettes; some foods like chocolate, alcohol, avocado, salt; owner's drugs. Inhaled: Paint fumes; overheated non-stick coatings; barbecue smoke; cigarette smoke; hair spray, exterminator spray. | Ingested: Provide warm environment (85-90°F [29-32°C]). Ingestion of inappropriate items may be a result of malnutrition (called pica) or owner behavior. Inhaled: Provide fresh air, ventilation. |
| A | Burns | Heat: Contact with hot cooking oil, hot water or hot surface; chick fed formula that is too hot. Electrical: Biting electrical cord. Chemical: Ingesting caustic chemical. | Place bird in quiet environment. Heat: Immediately apply cold compress. May apply Soother Plus. [®] Chemical: Immediately flush mouth with large amounts of cool water, being careful to avoid aspiration. |
| A | Egg-binding (lethargy, abdominal enlargement or straining, previous nesting activity; common in small birds) | General malnutrition, especially protein, vitamin A, D ₃ or calcium; first, soft-shelled or hybrid egg; over-production; hereditary factors; cold environment; lack of exercise. | Provide warm environment (85-90°F [29-32°C]). Do not give oil orally or via vent. |
| A | Vomiting/Regurgitation | Normal regurgitation to mate/owners; obstruction by foreign bodies; gastrointestinal irritation or infection; poisoning (pesticide, heavy metal). | Provide warm environment (85-90°F [29-32°C]). Remove food and water. If poisoning is suspected, see "poisoning" above. |
| B | Diarrhea/Excess urine/Wet droppings | If true unformed feces (pathologic): virus, bacteria, fungi, parasites, poisons, chlamydia, foreign body or malnutrition. If increase in fluid (polyuria): stress, excitement; over-consumption of watery foods; kidney disease. | Pathologic: Provide warm environment (85-90°F [29-32°C]). Place wax paper on bottom of enclosure to collect fresh feces for evaluation by veterinarian. Polyuria: Start on baby cereal mixed with 1 tsp. psyllium and 2 cups Gatorade [®] or reconstituted Tyrode's solution. |
| B | Eye abnormalities or discharge | Injury; infection (virus, chlamydia, mycoplasma, coliforms); lid abnormalities; malnutrition; sinusitis. | Apply natural or hypo-tears to affected eye. Do not use Murine, [®] Visine [®] or antibiotic drops/ointments. Consider warm compress. |
| B | Lacerations and cuts | Injury; hazardous environment; fighting; flying into ceiling fans; bite wounds from other animals. | Pressure bandage to control bleeding. If injury is from animal bite wound, contact veterinarian immediately. Do not use oil-based creams or ointments. |
| B | Overheating (panting, holds wings away from body) | No shade or retreat away from sun; left in car; improper supplemental heat; obesity. | Place feet and legs in cool water; mist feathers down to the skin with water. |
| B | Passing whole seeds | Gastrointestinal irritation or disturbance; grit obstruction; viral diseases; parasites; malnutrition; pancreatic disease; gastrointestinal cancer. | Provide warm environment (85-90°F [29-32°C]). Offer soft food. |
| B | Respiratory signs (coughing, sneezing, wheezing, runny nose, clicking, change of voice, breathing difficulties) | All species: Air sac or other respiratory infections from viruses, chlamydia, bacteria, fungi, parasites; malnutrition; tumors; obesity; foreign body in nares or trachea; egg-binding; aggravation from cigarette smoke, plastic, rug cleaners or other air-borne irritants. Budgies, specifically: Iodine deficiency. Macaws, specifically: pulmonary hypersensitivity syndrome. | Provide warm environment (85-90°F [29-32°C]) except for obesity. Offer fresh air. If respiratory signs due to poison, refer to "poisoning" above. |
| C | Bleeding from feather, nail, beak | Trauma; injury to pin feathers (growing out on trimmed wings with no mature feathers for support); malnutrition; nail or beak cut too short; injury (caught, bite, unsafe toys, nail too long, improper diet, liver disease). | Bleeding from feather: Prevent flapping. Clean affected feather and apply fine white flour or cornstarch. Bleeding from nail, beak: Minor bleeding stops with application of cornstarch, flour or bar soap. Grind in Monsell's solution, styptic pencil or Quick Stop. [®] |
| C | Oil contamination | Contact with household or cooking oil; application of greasy, over-the-counter ointment or other medication; contact with oily substances. | Provide warm environment (85-90°F [29-32°C]). Remove oil immediately. If heavy oil, dissolve first with light oil. Remove with dishwashing detergent solution (eg, Dawn [®]), rinse, dry immediately (blot with towel and blow dry). Wrap bird in towel or blanket. |

Conditions requiring veterinary attention: Contact a veterinarian if your bird shows any signs of unusual appearance or behavior, including: loss of appetite, weight loss, depression, weakness, unusual droppings, abdominal swelling, signs of trauma, seizures, loss of balance or favoring one leg or wing.