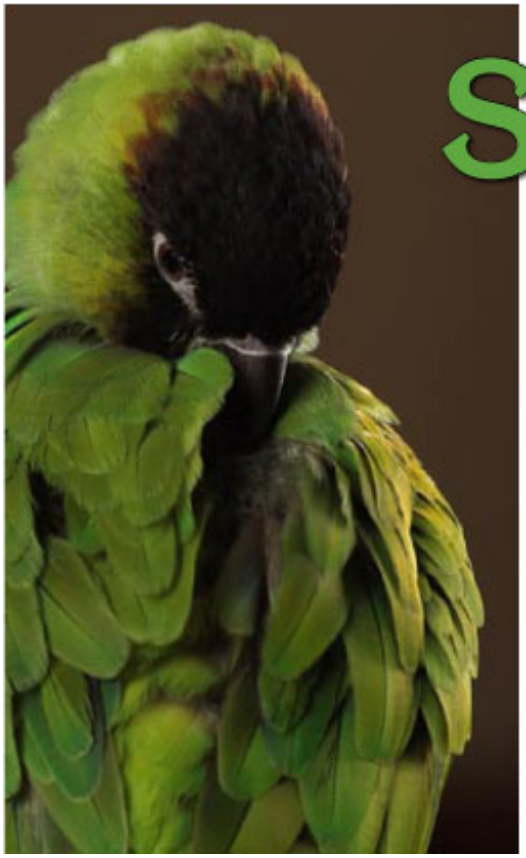
Feather Picking: Get to the Root of the Problem

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



Stop! feather picking

Feather picking is a confusing behavior. The hallmark of this self-destructive condition is loss of feathers on the body and neck with normal feathers on the head.

Feather picking is rare in wild birds since they depend on their feathers to maintain their body temperature and to fly away from danger, and their day to day lives are rarely, if ever, fraught with boredom. Behavior problems are the most common causes of feather picking, but disease conditions, environmental toxicities, genetic factors, and even improper wing trimming can contribute to feather loss.

Behavioral causes include boredom, frustration, breeding behavior, stress, attention getting, and lack of sleep.

When you and your avian veterinarian are sure there is no underlying disease, you both may decide to try some or all of the following:

- Change the diet to a primarily pelleted diet accompanied by fresh vegetables.
- Change the way the food is fed: make your bird work for his food!
- Change the environment to provide optimum temperature and humidity.
- Increase activity for your bird, including more time out of the cage, increase in number of new and innovative toys, and the hiding of food in the cage and in toys.
- Making the picking unpleasant with products such as Fooey Training Aid may help.
- Provide optimal conditions for 12 hours of sleep by using a separate sleeping cage with a cage cover in a quiet, dark room.

Changes do not occur overnight. But when you are consistent and resolute in stopping this behavior life will be better for you and for your bird.

WE RECOMMEND

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Parrot Piñata is a Soothing toy for feather pluckers.

Fooey ia a safe, effective way to stop destructive behaviors like feather picking or biting.

Black Parrot Playpen offers a variety of ladders and a hook to hang her favorite toy.

Cage Cover can be used to calm bird in times of stress or for undisturbed sleep.

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