How to Promote Health & Longevity in Your Bird

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

As the decades pass, we learn more and more about aviculture. Although birds have been kept for thousands of years, it hadn't been until the 1970's - relatively recently - that humane keeping and taming of exotic birds was consistent. We have come a long way from a parakeet in a cage with a bowl of seed, a cuttlebone, and a mirror to peck at!

The result of the widening popularity of keeping pet birds is that they are living longer lives. Many birds are significantly exceeding what their maximum life span would be in the wild! Parrots commonly outlive their dog and cat friends and some can even outlive their human companions.

The life span of pet birds range from 4-12 years for certain species of Lovebirds all the way up to 35-80 years for a Macaw! However, a bird is considered geriatric when it can no longer reproduce.

Remember that health and longevity start from hatchling on up, so the better care your bird receives throughout his life, the better chance he will have to live a long and healthy life.

- Make sure you have a veterinarian who specializes in avian medicine whom you can see and consult.
- Keep your bird's environment clean. Sanitation is an important factor in keeping your bird as healthy as possible.
- Provide lots of light. Light and warmth are musts for the older bird.
- The major age-related diseases owners must deal with are nutritionally related - either malnutrition (not getting enough of the proper nutrients) or obesity.
    - **Malnutrition** can be caused by poor eating habits such as an unbalanced diet, too much

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snacking, and not enough essential vitamins and minerals.

- Conversely, **obesity** occurs when your pet bird has too much of a good thing - too many treats, too much seed, too much high calorie "people food." Obesity can shorten the life span of a bird the same as it does other species, plus quality of life is poorer. Some examples of obesity-related conditions include joint pain, excess strain on the heart, liver problems and respiratory difficulties. Also, obesity can contribute to stress which may affect the immune system negatively, leaving the bird open for other problems. Remember that exercise is just as important for birds as it is for other pets in the house. Provide a safe play area where your bird can move around and have fun!

Proper nutrition and, if needed, vitamin/mineral supplementation can help prevent both malnutrition and obesity.

Other age-related problems that your avian veterinarian can diagnose and treat include:

- Vision problems, including cataracts
- Arthritis
- Heart disease

You can expect geriatric birds to lose muscle tone, show less luster in their plumage, and have some loss of skin tone. Supplements containing Essential Fatty Acids may help with the latter two conditions

The outlook for even better bird care is improving as everyone from the bird owner to the breeder to the veterinarian learn more about keeping these affable companions healthy.

We Recommend

Avian Missing Link targets the nutritional gap between a commercial diet and what your bird needs for optimum health.

Poop-Off nontoxic, biodegradable formula dissolves bird droppings for quick and easy cleaning.

AvianSun Deluxe Floor Lamp beneficial full-spectrum UVB & UVA for physical & psychological health.

Skin and Plumage Supplement for Birds eliminates problem skin and feathers.

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