Help Prevent Feather Picking

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If your bird's plumage is looking less than pristine, feather picking may be to blame. This unhealthy - and unsightly - habit of pulling out, breaking, or chewing feathers is not only worrisome for you, it can also indicate serious underlying avian medical conditions, such as varied infections, liver disease, or kidney disease.

Obtain an expert diagnosis

Your first line of defense against feather picking is a visit to your bird's veterinarian. A physical examination including lab work and a microscopic look at abnormal feathers gives your veterinarian essential diagnostic information. During the visit, share the details of your bird's diet and normal daily activities. You might also bring a photo of your bird's cage, clearly illustrating its placement within your home.

> Between your veterinarian's assistance and your willingness to learn what makes and keeps your bird happy, feather picking need not affect your bird's health and appearance.

Liver or kidney disorders, parasites, or infections require treatment. In the absence of a diagnosable medical condition, a change in diet - such as switching to pellet food and vegetables - and added foraging opportunities may help.Other possible solutions include daily misting, increased amounts of natural sunlight, a larger cage, and ensuring that your bird receives 12 hours of uninterrupted sleep in a dark, quiet environment. Your veterinarian may also recommend a deterrent spray such as Fooey Training Aid.

A busy bird is a healthy bird

Boredom is sure to contribute to your bird's feather picking - keep him occupied to foster his positive use of time. New toys or more time out of his cage may help alleviate feather picking. Consider adding a toy like a piñata or a rope toy. Try hiding food in a secluded spot in your bird's cage or even inside one of his favorite toys. In some cases, feather picking is not easily corrected; you must then accept your less-than-perfect bird and make appropriate changes to curtail his desire to pick and pluck.

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