Is Your Bird Ill? Know the Signs

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

WARNING SIGNS of SICKNESS

In nature, birds are more frequently prey than predator. Therefore, they will hide signs of illness to avoid appearing weak and vulnerable. This instinctive behavior also
extends to your pet bird, who will typically not "act sick" until he is very ill and too weak to continue disguising signs. At this point, you should contact your avian veterinarian immediately and avoid handling your bird (especially if he is small), since handling could make him worse.

One of the best things you can do to help ensure the health of your bird is to get to know his "routines" – the normal behavior patterns associated with eating, sleeping, playing, talking, and so on. Understanding his normal behavior will help you recognize when he is not at his best – when he may be sick and in need of assistance. Assess your bird's physical condition at least twice a day, so you can prevent him from reaching a critical stage of illness.

WARNING Signs

If your bird exhibits any of the following signs, take him to your avian veterinarian immediately.

- Changes in overall appearance or activity
- Weight loss, increased or decreased appetite, or changes in drinking habits
- Changes in breathing patterns – difficulty breathing, open-mouth breathing, excessive sneezing, gasping, clicking, or tail movement while breathing
- Decreased talking or singing
- Inability to walk or balance on perch
- Changes in droppings – color, volume, consistency, and number/frequency
- Straining to defecate or pass an egg
- Lackluster eyes or discharge around the eyes

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- Discharge from beak or nostrils
- Changes in beak appearance (excessive growth, flakiness, sudden softness, or color change)
- Changes in feathers – abnormal feather growth or ruffled, fluffed, stained, wet, broken, or dull feathers
- Changes in grooming habits
- Matted feathers and accumulation of waste around vent
- Changes in stance – lameness, favoring a leg, abnormal nail growth, swollen feet or joints

Remember, your bird won't let you know he's not feeling well until he is truly sick. To help your bird feel and be his best, observe him closely (and frequently), monitor his weight regularly with an accurate Avian scale, feed a healthy food, keep water fresh and easily available, and keep his cage warm and clean.

Keep food fresher and water cleaner with a covered feeder and a water bottle. A clean cage is a healthy cage, and the right cleaning supplies make the job quick and easy.

WE RECOMMEND

Electronic bird scale with accurate measuring in grams and ounces.

Well balanced, highly nutritious bird diets.

Heavy-duty Clean Cup Feeder/Waterer has a clear guard, and lifts out easily for filling.

Nontoxic bird poop remover.

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