April is Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Month

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

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Make sure your bird stays out of harm's way by providing the best care possible. Below are just a few of the factors that can seriously affect your bird's health and happiness:

CAGE PLACEMENT

Cage location can be critical. Since birds are prey animals in the wild, place the cage so that one side is against a wall. This helps your bird feel sheltered and safe from predators. Keep the cage away from ceiling fans, which can be seen as a big, flying predator. Don't place a permanent cage in front of a window, as your bird cannot relax his search for enemies, nor can he find refuge from direct sun. Be aware of your bird's cage placement at night. Nighttime shadows from a television or a blinking light can be scary to birds.

LIGHTING

Light is a frequently overlooked, yet essential, aspect of bird care. On a daily basis, light determines the sleep cycle, signaling when to sleep and when to wake up - ultimately affecting the quality of sleep. Restful sleep contributes to a healthy immune system, reduces fatigue, and minimizes stress. For general, non-breeding purposes, your bird needs 12 hours of daylight and 12 hours of darkness for restful sleep.

NUTRITION

Different species of birds have very different nutritional needs. Even within the same species, diets of wild birds may differ due to environment. A diet made specifically to meet the needs of your bird's species is essential. It is also vital to offer your bird fresh vegetables and very small amounts of fruits appropriate for his species. Variety is also critical to nutrition and important to the satisfaction of your bird.

CLEANLINESS AND SANITATION

One of the most important things you can do to keep your bird healthy is to clean his cage, playstands, and accessories regularly. Decomposing food in food/water bowls and regurgitated food on toys and accessories all contribute to the growth of potentially dangerous microorganisms. Insist on a sanitary feeding environment; remove uneaten fresh foods at day's end, provide fresh water daily, and wash food/water bowls regularly.

The way our birds are housed and fed has a tremendous impact on their susceptibility to disease, behavior problems, and breeding capabilities. The number one rule: Learn all you

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can about your bird's specific environmental and nutritional needs.

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