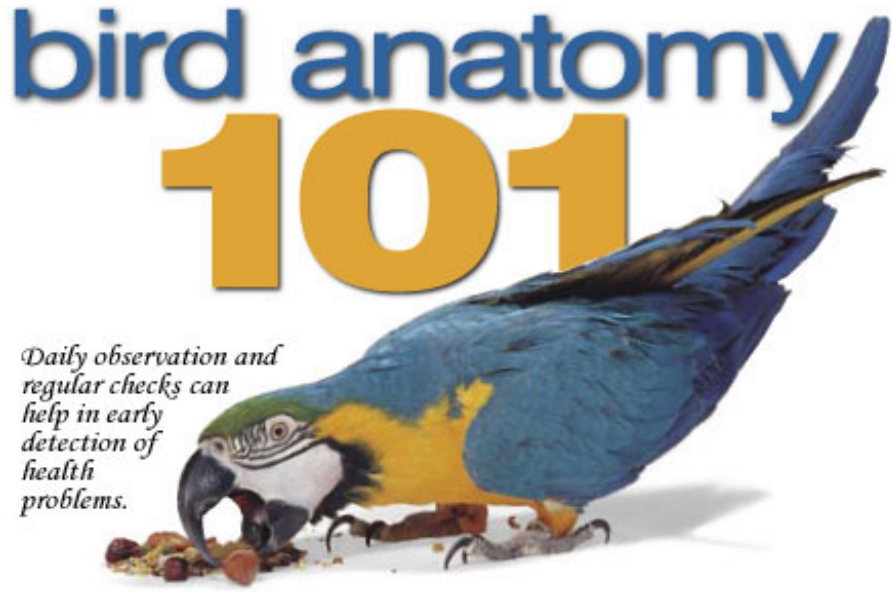
Bird Anatomy 101: Avian Health Checklist

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



bserving your bird, doing a simple examination each month, and providing preventive care and good nutrition and housing can save on healthcare costs and add to your bird's longevity. That's a fact. And the extra attention will benefit your bird and you! The following is a very simple at-home assessment you can do yourself and includes possible solutions for preventing disease. Report any problems to your veterinarian. Make sure your bird has regular veterinary checkups, too, to catch and treat problems early.

general appearance: Is your bird gaining or losing weight? Is she having trouble walking or balancing on perches? Do you notice a change in stance, such as lameness, favoring a leg, abnormal nail growth, swollen feet or joints? If you do happen to notice changes in her general appearance or behavior, it could be indicative of illness or injury. To help your bird feel and be her best, observe her closely (and frequently) and monitor her weight regularly with an accurate Digital Bird Scale. Feed a healthy food, keep water fresh and easily available by using items like the Smart Crock or Glass Water Bottle and keep her cage warm and clean.

eyes: Do you observe any discharge around the eyes, squinting or half-closed eyes, redness or loss of feathers around the eyes, or lackluster eyes? All are possible signs of disease in your bird. Swelling

legs and feet: Since birds spend the majority of their time standing on their feet, good perches are essential. A variety of types and sizes should be supplied. Natural tree branches like the Dragonwood or

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or clouding can mean infections or a Vitamin A deficiency. Feeding birds a seed-only diet can lead to this deficiency. Instead, use pelleted diets, such as ZuPreem AvianMaintenance, or Roudybush Daily Maintenance and supplement with fresh vegetables daily.

beak: Beak care is critical for the overall health of your bird. The beak is the entry for nutrients, and is used for climbing and playing. Check your bird's beak daily, looking for cracks, overgrowth, or discoloration.

Provide chew toys like the Nature Cluster or the Bird Kabob Toys to help keep her beak trim. Also, include different textures of perches in your bird's environment, including conditioning perches made specifically for beak and nail health, such as the Safety Perch. Consult an avian veterinarian if you suspect your bird's beak is growing unevenly.

tongue: A normal, healthy tongue is usually smooth and pink, black, or gray, depending on the species. If you notice abnormal swellings or a discharge on the tongue, it could indicate an illness, such as hypovitaminosis A, granulomas, papillomas, or an infection. Contaminated food or water can be a source of infection for your bird. Cleaning the cage daily can be a snap when you use a product like Poop-Off. Easily removable Smart Crocks make cleaning food dishes a breeze. Buy two, so you'll always have a clean one available.

Manzanita Perches provide vital foot exercise. Because of their uneven shape, your bird is not always putting pressure on the same part of the foot when she stands. If you notice any of the following changes in your bird's legs or feet, it could be a sign of disease: lameness or favoring a leg; flakiness, crusting, or discoloration of feet; abnormal nail growth; shifting feet; swollen feet or joints.

feathers: The condition of your bird's plumage is a primary indicator of her overall health. The following changes in feathers are suggestive of illness: ruffled or fluffed feathers; lost, misshaped, or broken feathers; decreased preening; wet, stained, or matted feathers; dull feathers; long or excessive molt; bald spots; pulling or picking at feathers; abnormal color or barring. Bathing helps maintain plumage by removing dust, extra oils, dander, loose feathers, and insect pests, while supplying supplemental moisture. The Exo Terra Mister Spray Bottle offers a refreshing mist to not only provide an invigorating bath, but increase humidity as well.

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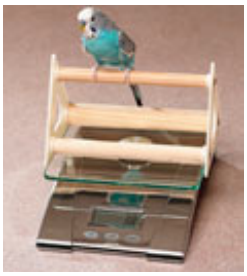
WE RECOMMEND

ZuPreem AvianMaintenance provides tasty flavors and complete nutrition in one balanced diet. Vitamin and mineral fortified to help prevent dangerous deficiencies.

Poop-Off uses tough enzyme action to quickly and easily release set-in stains. Nontoxic, biodegradable formula is safe for cleaning your bird's habitat.



Digital Bird Scale makes monitoring your bird's weight and dietary intake easy. Changes in weight and eating behavior could be a sign that your bird is sick or injured.

Related Articles

- Is your bird ill? Know the signs
- How to use a bird mister
- How to take care of your bird's beak

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