Holidays Don't Have to be Stressful for Your Bird

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

The holidays are a happy time of the year, but present special challenges to bird owners. Being an instinctive creature of habit, your bird may not cope well with the holiday transformation in your household. The sights and sounds you enjoy might well disturb your pet. With attentive care, you can prevent or minimize the stress, as well as the negative behaviors that can result from changes.

Sources of stress

Your bird's holiday stress may originate from many different sources:

- Any change can be perceived as a threat by your bird. Decorations. Trees and lights. Music. Foods. The distinctive sights, sounds, and smells of the holidays represent big changes, even if your bird never leaves his cage.
- Because of their unique respiratory system and other factors, birds have a higher sensitivity to odors and fumes. The strong fragrances of potpourri, scented candles, and cooking can be irritants. And remember, fumes from non-stick cooking surfaces such as Teflon ® can be very toxic to birds.
- Most birds need 10-12 hours of darkness for proper rest. The increased activity in your household during the holidays could keep it illuminated up to 18 hours a day, disrupting your pet's schedule and sleep.
- The coming and going of strangers and relatives can be very intimidating. Your bird will react to their voices and body language, and may be emotionally charged when approached.
- Because you are busy shopping, entertaining, or traveling, time with your pet may be limited. Play, feeding, and maintenance routines might be disrupted. Your bird might feel left out or even experience separation anxiety.

Signs of stress

Birds that are stressed may show a variety of signs including:

- Biting
- Screaming
- Feather picking
- Eating less, or not at all
- Changes in the character or quantity of droppings

Holiday stress relievers

Follow these tips to make a difference in your bird's holiday stress level.

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- Maintain feeding and hygiene routines. A treat here and there should be just that. Do not make big changes in diet during the holidays.
- Provide your pet toys and pacifiers to pass the time, especially if he shows any signs of feather picking.
- A good cage cover is perhaps your most important tool to minimize stress during the holidays. You can use it to regulate light, protect your pet from guests and other pets, or give your pet a "time-out" if stressed.
- Limit your pet's exposure to strangers. This may mean relocating his cage, but this change may be less stressful than exposure to a roomful of loud party goers.
- If an accident does occur, be prepared. Make sure you have an avian first aid kit ready and veterinarian contact information where it is easy to find. Also, remain calm. Your bird can sense your emotions. If you react strongly, your bird will too.

We hope these tips help you and your pet enjoy a happy, fun, and safe holiday season!

The following products may be helpful to have on hand over the holidays!

Toys for Stress Relief

Cage Cover

Avian First Aid Kit

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