



Royal Animal Hospital

HOW DO I RECOGNISE A STRESSED PARROT?

Some of the symptoms may include the following:

- Bird is hunched, eyes wide, shaking.
- New feathers may show parallel lines of weakness known as stress bars.
- Bird may be quieter or noisier than usual.
- Diarrhoea or a difference in consistency or colour of droppings.
- Do they tremble when a human approaches?
- A stressed bird may bite humans out of fear.
- Repetitive movements similar to an animal pacing up and down its cage.
- Feather picking. Self-mutilation.
- A thin breast instead of a plump breast.
- Parrots that have not been properly socialised when young, especially hand-reared birds, are most likely to develop these behaviours.

With parrots the most common causes of stress are boredom, inadequate relationship between the bird and its owners, unsuitable caging, anxiety due to the environment, cruelty by owners (usually unintentional).

Well adjusted, properly socialised parrots can cope with a certain amount of stress. It is those birds which are not well socialised and do not have a good relationship with their keepers which are vulnerable to suffering undue stresses.



Some of the things which often cause some birds to be stressed are:

1. New homes and new owners.
2. New people in the home.
3. Building and decorating or a change in the environment such as new

curtains, new pictures, new furniture.

4. Too small a cage. Small cages are common.
5. Too much noise.
6. The presence of other animals or birds, or harassment by other animals, birds or people.
7. Poor nutrition leading to malnutrition. This is very very common in birds fed parrot seed, instead of pellets. Parrots are severely ill before owners realise
8. Sudden changes in diet or new foods.
9. Separation anxiety from a bird or owner. Owner spends less time in the house. Loss of mate or owner. Loss of familiar pet.
10. Moulting, breeding and rearing young
11. Illness or fractures. Common in poorly fed birds.
12. Incompatible cage mate.
13. Digestive problems. Look at the droppings.
14. Infection.
15. Medication
16. Exposure to aerosols and cleaning agents via air or physical contact. Birds can be poisoned by cooking fumes etc.
17. Dirty cages. Some birds can't bear to step on their own faeces
18. Allergies or poisoning. Zinc and lead poisoning is surprisingly common.
19. Lack of freedom, lack of exercise, not enough to do, chronic boredom. Birds should spend several hours each day out of their cages with their owners, while being supervised. It's cruel to keep them in a cage (even a good one) 24 hours a day.
20. Change of routine, - often due to change in owner's work patterns.
21. Not enough rest because too much going on children, pets, TV, lights.
22. Too little sleep due to owner's late nights.
23. Sudden change in position of cage. Birds need their core territory to be in the same place.
24. Travelling
25. Handling or mishandling.
26. Central heating so that the bird is too dry. Sudden change in temperature either hotter or colder.
27. Loneliness. No other living being is there.
28. Emotional stress at home - owners quarrelling or children quarrelling or other pets quarrelling.

