



Use of some guidelines in relating to an individual parrot in the examination room will make the experience more comfortable for both the bird and the handler. The most important consideration is the fact that parrots are prey species (we know this based on the position of their eyes), and humans are basically “predators.” Thus, the attitude of the person or persons caring for the avian patient determines the bird’s perceived threat level. By our not staring at the bird, by approaching the bird from the side, by showing our back and looking away from the bird, it perceives that the handler has no bad intentions and therefore the bird has nothing to fear.

The basic protocol for veterinarians and caregivers of parrots, which can also be used with any parrot showing behavior problems, can be summarized in 5 steps.

1 Establish yourself as a leader through nurturing guidance. In the examination room, it is important to position the parrot to one side of

As I See It
Protocol for Relating to Parrots in the Exam Room
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the room rather than on a table between you and the owner. Show the parrot that you are in charge through your confidence and self-assurance. Show that you are

happy and comfortable and not upset about anything. You are thus a positive role model for the bird. Do not interact with the parrot—don’t even look at it, although make sure

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you have all the attention of the bird. You can be silly, such as playing with toys or throwing a little ball against the ceiling. A parrot feels comfortable with people who are comfortable with parrots and with themselves. Your behavior in this environment will tell it all about you. You often have to play a role to create a desired behavior. The bird observes you and learns about this new environment

Continued on page 2

in a non-threatening situation. Ask the owner not to look at the bird or respond to its behavior either, but to look at you instead.

2 Establish yourself as someone who considers the parrot to be the most beautiful creature you have ever seen (and mean it). Tell the parrot how precious it is to you in a non-threatening manner. Again, you may have to perform like a professional actor. The praise in Step 2 can be considered as the “reward” for behavior that has been created by your attitude in performing Step 1.

3 Establish yourself as the best teacher the parrot could wish for. Acknowledge and show respect for its intelligence by sharing, in detail, what there is to see around it—i.e., birds in the trees, toys on the table, objects’ colors, shapes and sizes. Make the bird feel important. Parrots truly enjoy good conversation, no matter who’s doing the talking, but especially if it’s someone they respect and can learn from! By doing so, you are rewarding and praising their intelligence. The parrot will definitely pay attention, listen and learn. This is similar to how a nursery school teacher relates to a group of 3- to 4-year-old children.

4 Tell the bird that it is okay for it to touch your pen, toy, paper or towel and verbally reward the bird

enthusiastically for doing so. Let it touch items only when you say it is okay. When the bird reaches out for anything else, just take it away without a word and present it later after saying that *now* it is okay to touch or even bite into the item. Allow the bird to participate in the learning process by offering it new, small, nonthreatening objects.

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Using the 5-step protocol within the exam room can help achieve positive behavior even under scary circumstances.

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Allow the bird to investigate by touching the objects gently with its tongue. Praise each positive move. Each time you present your hand, praise the bird enthusiastically when it steps up to your hand. The parrot will perform the desired behavior because it is being positively reinforced.

5 Show the bird that accepting new situations is okay because there are reasons to trust you under the circumstances that you have created. Verbally praise (reward) the bird for accepting the new situation. When the parrot shows fear, do not reassure the bird, but show it that you are not concerned about this. Reassurance can easily create more fear and

insecurity. In the experience of the author, performing Steps 1 to 4 results in a situation of mutual respect and trust. When the bird fears an object, such as a towel, start over again with Step 1 of the protocol, demonstrating that you “like” the towel. When the fear is not rewarded and the bird is allowed to touch the towel, it will soon accept it. Then, tell the bird how brave and wonderful it is. Each time it overcomes a fear, praise it. This will help to stimulate the self-esteem all parrots need to develop normal parrot behavior. The desired outcome is to create a situation in which a parrot can accept novel activities: a physical examination, blood collection, grooming, wing clipping, gentle toweling or whatever you need to do.

This protocol is a way of desensitization the parrot. Showing respect and trust creates respect, trust and self-esteem for the bird. In dealing with parrots, it is critical to always use the 5 points in the correct order and not start with Step 4 or 5. The whole protocol may take less than 2 minutes and can even be performed within 30 seconds.

In my Clinic for Birds, I use some of my own birds to show frightened parrots that they can trust me as much as my own birds do. This works well because parrots learn by observing and drawing their



Greg J. Harrison from Clinical Avian Medicine

Umbrella cockatoo exhibiting “alert” display. Species and individual variations dictate how a parrot in this behavioral mode should be approached.

own conclusions.

Using the 5-step protocol in the examination room before any handling begins rewards the bird in each of the preceding 4 steps for desired behavior. By using this protocol we ensure that the bird understands that the veterinarian does not intend to do harm, but is using positive reinforcement to achieve positive behavior, even under “scary” circumstances. It’s like educating guide dogs for the blind or police horses to accept situations that might be considered “scary.” That’s what we all expect from the pediatrician, too, in dealing with our children. Parrots will only be comfortable when the caregiver is comfortable under all circumstances as the perfect role model.

A DVD called “Caring for Parrots” demonstrates the 5-step protocol and provides other behavioral and enrichment information. It is available at www.avianhealthcare.com.

Comment from Dr. Greg J. Harrison: Using Dr. Hooimeijer’s protocol will take some extra patience with a bird that has been damaged by previous “threatening” interactions with humans, but the results are well worthwhile.



Use of Plants to Reduce Levels of Indoor Pollution

Modern homes contain abundant amounts of chemicals that are not healthy for the inhabitants. For example, benzene is a common solvent found in plastics, oil, detergents, dyes and pharmaceuticals; long-term exposure to benzene has been shown to cause multiple disorders in humans. Trichloroethylene (TCE) may be found in metal degreasers, paint, ink and adhesives. The National Cancer Institute has identified TCE as a liver carcinogen. Formaldehyde is used in insulation and pressed wood flooring, cigarette smoke, clothing and paper products. It is blamed for respiratory and dermatologic disorders. Even common cleaning products, air fresheners, disinfectants and off-gassing of plastics as they age pollute indoor air.

Improving indoor air quality should be a priority to maintain health. One solution is to provide abundant indoor plants to help clean the air. All plants convert car-



bon dioxide to oxygen, but some actually remove toxic chemicals from the air.

A study was conducted by the National Aeronautics Space Administration (NASA) in cooperation with the Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA) to determine how air pollution can be reduced with the use of indoor plants. Although the leaves provide some filtering activity, results of the study indicated that the plant root/soil zone appeared to be the most effective area for removing volatile organic chemicals. One way to maximize air exposure to this plant root/soil area would be the use of fan-driven air that passes over soil and then through activated carbon, which

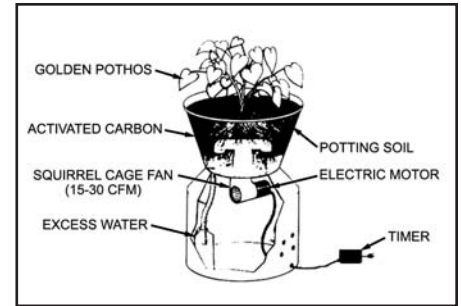


Figure 1. An indoor air purification system with house plants and activated carbon?

extracts chemicals from the environment. The air is released clean back into the room. Figure 1 illustrates how an indoor air purification system combining house plants and activated carbon can be established. Activated carbon is available through plant nurseries. Some plants to consider adding to your home are listed in Table 1.

References

1. Wolverton BC, Johnson A, Bounds K: Interior Landscape Plants for Indoor Air Pollution Abatement. Stennis Space Center, MS, NASA, 1989.
2. http://healthychild.org/blog/comments/tip_10_house_plants_make_good_air_filters/. Accessed April, 2008.



Table 1. Plants to Consider Adding to Your Home

- Janet Craig (*Dracaena deremensis* "Janet Craig")
- Marginata (*Dracaena marginata*)
- Mass cane or corn plant (*Dracaena massangeana*)
- Mother-in-law's tongue (*Sansevieria laurentii*)
- Warneckei (*Dracaena deremensis* "Warneckei")





Look for the USDA Certified Organic Seal

It is easy to become confused with the many health-oriented labels one finds on foods in the marketplace, such as “organic,” “whole” or “all natural.” Most of these labels do not have standards applied to their use. Not even all bird food labeled just “organic” has been evaluated. To ensure that the highest quality ingredients and preparation protocols have been used, look for the **USDA** organic seal, which you will find on Harrison’s Bird Foods products. At a minimum, the USDA organic seal certifies that the food contains at least 95% organic ingredients, and the growing and processing practices support sustainable agriculture. For more information, go to www.usda.gov and click on “Agriculture” and then “Organic Certification.”

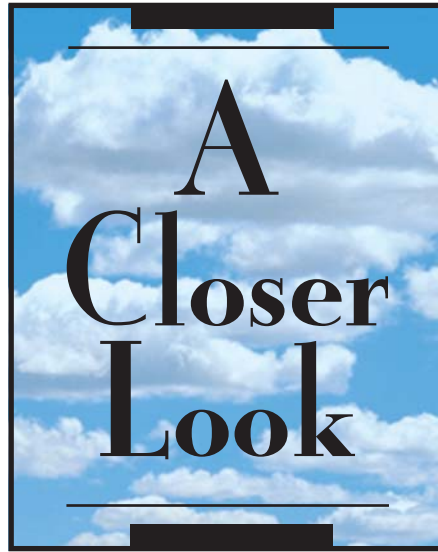
What Does “Organic” Mean?

In 2002 the U.S. Department of Agriculture put in place a set of national standards that food labeled “organic” must meet, whether it is grown in the United States or imported.

Organic agriculture is an ecological production management system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity. It is based on minimal use of off-farm inputs and on management practices that restore, maintain and enhance ecological harmony.

“Organic” is a labeling term that denotes products produced under the authority of the Organic Foods Production Act. The principal guidelines for organic production are to use materials and practices that enhance the ecological balance of natural systems and that integrate the parts of the farming system into an ecological whole.

Organic food handlers, processors and retailers adhere to standards that maintain the integrity of organic agricultural prod-



ucts. The primary goal of organic agriculture is to optimize the health and productivity of interdependent communities of soil life, plants, animals, people and the environment in general.

Organic food is produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations. Organic food is produced without using: 1) most conventional pesticides; 2) fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge; 3) bioengineering (GMO); or 4) ionizing radiation. Before a product can be labeled “organic,” a government-approved certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer is following all the rules necessary to meet USDA organic standards. Companies that process organic food before it gets to your local supermarket, restaurant or veterinarian must be certified, also. They must store the food correctly and use biocompatible insect control and cleaning products.

No GMOs

Products containing GMOs (genetically modified organisms) or genetically engineered crops cannot be certified organic.

Does “Natural” Mean Organic?

No. Natural and organic are not interchangeable. Other truthful claims, such as free-range, hormone-free and natural, can

still appear on food labels. However, don’t confuse these terms with “organic.” Only food labeled “certified organic” meets USDA organic standards.

What Does “Certified Organic” Mean?

“Certified organic” means that a non-profit, state or private certification organization, accredited by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), has verified that products labeled as “organic” meet strictly defined organic standards.

Why is “Certification” Important?

The National Organic Program requires certification of agricultural products making an organic label claim in order to:

- Provide for product differentiation
- Ensure the product’s value
- Protect consumers from fraud
- Boost consumer confidence.

What is the National Organic Program?

The National Organic Program (NOP) is a federal regulatory agency created by the USDA to:

- Develop and implement national standards governing the marketing of agricultural products as organically produced
- Facilitate commerce in fresh and processed food that is organically produced
- Ensure consumers that such products meet consistent standards.

How Can You Tell Which Products are Organically-produced?

You must look at package labels. Along with the USDA certified organic seal and national organic standards, the USDA developed strict labeling rules to help consumers know the exact organic content of the food they buy. The certifying agency approves all of these steps.

For more detailed information on the USDA organic standards, visit www.ams.usda.gov/nop, call the National Organic Program at 202-720-3252, or write USDA-AMS-TM-NOP, Room 4008 S. Bldg., Ag Stop 0268, 1400 Independence, SW, Washington, DC 20250.





Updated Handbook for a Healthier Bird

The Harrison's Bird Foods' Handbook for a Healthier Bird booklet has been revised and is available for distribution to your clients. This is a valuable resource for any veterinary clinic that promotes wellness in pet birds. Ask for your free copies the next time you place an order (800-346-0269).

Drop Shipment Program

We appreciate that many animal hospitals do not have the retail space available to

HBD NEWS



Tanya Harrison Coffinberry

offer on-site availability of products they recommend to their clients. That is why Harrison's Bird Foods offers a drop-shipment program to veterinarians who have these shelf space issues or who have clients who may not find it convenient to make regular office visits. The drop-shipment program works this way:

- The client places the order through your veterinary clinic.

- Your clinic forwards the order to the HBD office (via phone, fax, email or online).
- The order is shipped directly to the client with only a packing slip enclosed (no invoice).
- The clinic is billed privately by HBD at the veterinary distributor rate.
- The client is billed by your clinic at the regular retail price (plus shipping fees).
- The transaction is complete!

This service is appreciated by many clients, and it benefits both them and the clinic. The client is happy because fresh Harrison's food is delivered right to his/her door. The veterinary clinic is happy because it does not have to maintain a large inventory of all the types of food available or worry about rotating the stock, and each sale produces the expected profit margin.

Online Free Access to Avian Medicine: Principles & Application

As part of our commitment to educating veterinarians, HBD International is proud to make the complete avian reference text, Avian Medicine: Principles and Application, available online to veterinarians at no cost. This excellent text, which is soon

Harrison's Bird Bread Mix

For a healthy treat bird owners can make themselves, Harrison's Bird Foods offers a special certified organic Bird Bread Mix for home preparation of bird food. Among other uses, clinicians can recommend that owners bake the Harrison's Bird Bread to assist in changing a bird's diet, be hidden as a foraging reward or used as a vehicle for administering medications.



"My parrots, Esther and KC, love the Harrison's Bird Bread Mix and it is easy to prepare. At first, they couldn't be bothered with it, now it is all they want." - Gloria

INDICATIONS/USES

- Provides a healthy alternative for bird owners who choose to prepare their own bird food or those who give regular treats to their birds
- Can be used as a vehicle for administering liquid medications
- Can be used to assist in converting birds to a formulated diet
- Can be offered instead of table food to birds that like to eat at family mealtimes
- Can be hidden as a foraging reward
- Can be moistened and offered to birds that are feeding chicks as a soft food
- Can be used as a weaning food to transition to a solid formulated diet
- Provides an easy-to-use transition for hospitalized or boarding birds until acceptance of the appropriate formulated diet

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

- May make up to 30% of the daily diet.
- If prepared with the addition of fruits, vegetables or nuts, Bird Bread should be considered a "treat" and fed only in limited quantities (no more than 10% of the diet).
- Can be served warm.
- Some flavorings (vanilla, maple) or herbs can be added as long as they do not change the nutritional content.



to be out of print, was voted as the number one avian reference in Bird Talk magazine. Go to www.avianmedicine.net.



Client Product Information Cards

Easy-to-read client education cards (rack cards) are now available for all 13 Harrison's Bird Foods (and AVIX bird wellness products). Call 800-346-0269 to request your free information cards with your order to help support your avian food product recommendations. These cards fit perfectly in the Bird Care Info Pack folders, which are sold in sets of 25 for \$10.

Exotic DVM Teams with IVIS

HBD International is pleased to announce a new partnership with IVIS (International Veterinary Information Service) and Exotic DVM Veterinary Magazine. IVIS will begin distribution of selected articles from each issue of Exotic DVM to its 200,000 members four times each year. Go to www.IVIS.com to register for free access.

Tips for Conversion

What do you suggest to clients who say they are having difficulty converting their birds to Harrison's Bird Foods? A new



"Quick Tips for Conversion" flyer also includes "How to Evaluate Your Bird's Droppings." Call 800-346-0269 to request your free copies with your order.



Red Palm Oil Client Brochure

It may be confusing for clients to know the differences among all the red palm oils that are available on the market. That's why we developed a new brochure, All Red Palm Oil is Not the Same. The brochure explains that Sunshine Factor, which is also

the same red palm oil found in Power Treats, is oil from the red palm **fruit**, not the palm **kernel**, which is the basis for many other products that do not provide the same health benefits. The brochure goes on to explain that Sunshine Factor is 100% certified organic, which means no pesticides, preservatives or other contaminants were used in growing, processing or bottling. Sunshine Factor is a sustainable agricultural product, not harvested from locations where plantation crops have contributed to the continued destruction of tropical rainforests and threatened endangered wildlife. Ask for your free copies of the brochure the next time you place an order.



Complementary Therapies Provided by AVIX Products

To complement your HBD wellness program, the following AVIX products may be beneficial for the health of your clients' birds.

Bird Rain - This all-natural bath can be used on all birds, no matter what foods they are eating. Bird Rain is a complementary protocol for all HBD formulations. (Do not use on featherless chicks or critically ill birds.)

Soother Spray - This topical product that relieves skin irritations can be used in conjunction with any of the HBD diets; however, best results are achieved when used when feeding High Potency and Power Treats. (Do not use on featherless chicks or critically ill birds.)



Soother Ointment - This topical pain reliever can be used in conjunction with any HBD formulation and can be used on all birds of any age under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian.

Booster - Booster is beneficial as a dietary supplement for all HBD diets, except Power Treats. Booster is especially helpful for stressed or sick birds or for birds that need support of their immune system. It works well for birds during a diet conversion, in hand-

raising formulas, for growing chicks and for any bird recovering from an illness or being medically treated by a veterinarian.

Sunshine Factor - This organic Brazilian red palm fruit oil complements all diets (Harrison's or seeds), except Power Treats, and can be used as a dietary supplement for all birds. Do not use in conjunction with Booster.

Bird Builder - Bird Builder is a mineral and iodine supplement that is good for birds that eat only seeds, especially those that are sick. This supplement can be used during the conversion of a bird to HBD diets. Once the bird is eating HBD exclusively, the use of Bird Builder should be discontinued.

All AVIX products can be purchased through HBD International at 800-346-0269.



WE GET MAIL



26-Year-Old Cockatiel

Sammy, my 26-year-old cockatiel, is just finishing up a heavy molt, so he looks slightly rougher than usual. The fact that he is 26 years old and in perfect health is a testimony to quality food. I give Sammy the High Potency Fine formula because, with him being elderly, it makes me feel better for him to have the slightly richer food.

Robin Cherkas

What's Best for Doves

I want to thank you for taking the time to thoroughly answer all my questions regarding my doves' dietary needs. You helped me have a better understanding of how to properly provide good nutrition for them. This is much appreciated as I am fairly new to keeping birds and want to learn how best to care for them. I am passing along the Harrison's information to others who have doves. I would love to read any further information you have to send me.

*Quincetta Thompson
Helena, Montana*

Tricks for a Power Treat

I hand-fed Coco, my yellow-fronted Amazon, from the age of 3 weeks, and she has always been on Harrison's. She will do anything for a Power Treat (a trick, talk, beg)—she absolutely loves Power Treats. She holds them carefully to be sure she doesn't drop a single bit. I know that she really loves the Pepper formula because she immediately started holding the Pepper formula as well! I like to use the Pepper formula as an occasional change to her regular diet (Adult Lifetime Coarse formula).

Robin Cherkas



Bald to Beautiful

When my husband and I bought Merlin, a male eclectus parrot, from an individual in late 2005, he had several places on his neck where he was missing feathers and was underweight. Our vet recommended we try the Harrison's High Potency Coarse for him and his mate, Scarlet. Merlin was 4 years old at the

time. His diet before we received him was mainly a seed diet. It took us a little while to change Merlin and Scarlet's diet because we did not want to introduce too much change all at once. They accepted the diet well. A few months after the diet change they began to breed. They had never bred before, and Merlin is very attached to humans so we



were pleasantly surprised. Merlin enjoys the Harrison's Bird Food and since that time, all 8 of our birds eat only Harrison's and fresh vegetables and fruit. The picture does not come close to the beautiful green he has become. All his bald spots are gone and he has brought his weight back to a normal range. Thank you!



Avian Examiners to be Digital Format Only

In order to be consistent with our commitment to making an environmental difference by consuming (paper) wisely, future issues of HBD's Avian Examiner will be available only in digital format. You may access the latest copy (as well as all past issues) on the web site: www.avianmedicine.net. If we have your email address on file, we will send you an update as each new issue becomes available online. Please contact customerservice@harrisonsbirdfoods.com.



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Photos courtesy of Ariana Finkelstein, DVM

Jalapeño before and after conversion to Harrison's Bird Foods

HBD's Avian Examiner is brought to you as a service of HBD International, manufacturer and distributor of Harrison's Bird Foods. This publication is part of HBD's commitment to building avian practice through education and nutritionally sound diets. Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information presented herein (particularly drug doses), it is the responsibility of the clinician to critically evaluate the contents, to stay informed of pharmacokinetic information and to observe recommendations provided in the manufacturers' inserts. Reader responses, comments and suggestions are encouraged. Please mail to Avian Examiner, 7108 Crossroads Blvd., Suite 325, Brentwood, TN 37027 or fax to 800-279-5984.