



## Possible Prevention for Prolapsed Cloaca

Chris Migliore  
Avian Behaviorist  
The Bird Hospital

In my consultations with bird owners, the topic often involves inappropriate behavior of umbrella cockatoos (e.g., excessive vocalizations, demand for attention and feather-picking). The veterinarians at The Bird Hospital, Drs. Harrison and Flinchum, also encounter cloacal prolapses of undetermined cause in these cockatoos.

According to Dr. Fern Van Sant, who owns an exclusive avian practice in California, all these undesirable behaviors, including the voluntary prolapsing of the cloaca, may be the result of improper weaning practices. In her caseload, she consistently sees these birds as not having been weaned at the proper age, continuously fed a diet of warm, moist food as adults, and overly coddled by the owner.



In most cases, when the well-meaning owner feeds the warm, soft food from the hands, dish, spoon, and, in some instances, even his/her own mouth, the bird becomes confused. A bird in the wild would receive warm, moist food only from the parent or mate. In captivity, this feeding practice identifies the owner as the "mate," which results in a hormonal cascade of events. The bonding increases and the bird will start to display sexual behavior — females will pant and males will masturbate and beg for food. The uneducated owner may view this as "cute" and not change his/her own behavior toward the bird, which compounds the problem. This behavior



may start as early as 9-10 months of age and progress to prolapse of the cloaca as part of the sexual behavior.

Dr. Van Sant is successfully treating these birds by adhering to a very strict protocol:

1. The bird must be immediately weaned onto a dry diet. This means NO warm, moist food, NO food other than what is in their dish, and NO hand-feedings.
2. The owner's behavior has to be modified to eliminate any activity — excessive petting and cuddling — that may sexually stimulate the bird.
3. The bird's enclosure should be placed in a new and

neutral location.

4. The bird should receive abundant fresh air, opportunity for exercise and natural photoperiods.
5. In some cases, Lupron® injections (over period of time) may be required.

If these steps do not eliminate the cloacal prolapsing, the bird may need to be placed in another environment.

To help prevent this from occurring, owners should be encouraged to purchase only birds that have been fully and properly weaned and socialized by experienced breeders.



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# Practice TIPS

## Corticosteroid Use in Birds

Gwen Flinchum, DVM  
The Bird Hospital  
Lake Worth, FL

I distinctly remember graduating from veterinary school with a healthy if not morbid fear of corticosteroid use in animals. With all of the warnings of side effects such as immunosuppression, gastrointestinal irritation and delayed healing, I had resolved that corticosteroids would probably seldom, if ever, be in my regimens of therapy.

When I began practicing at The Bird Hospital I saw a variety of sick birds, including those with trauma, toxicity and bacterial septicemias. In many cases, I was not getting the positive responses I felt I should have been getting.

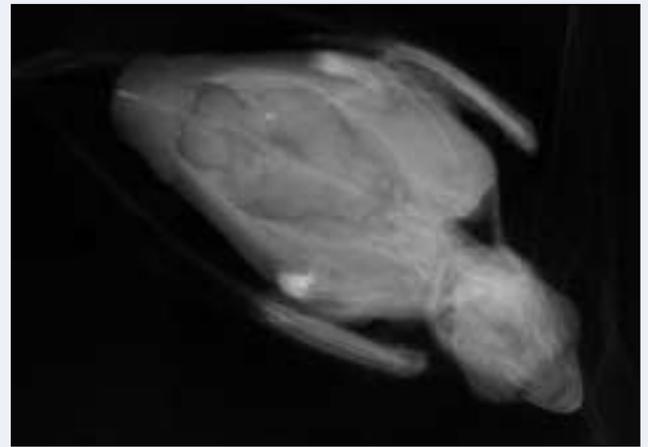
One day my colleague, Dr. Greg Harrison, suggested giving some dexamethasone. Remarkably, when I relented to giving injections of dexamethasone to hospitalized birds (2 mg/kg intramuscularly, given once), within 4 hours these birds would look significantly more alert, become

a little more active and begin nibbling food on their own. Many went on to recover uneventfully. After several cases it appeared to me that *not* giving

dexamethasone had a worse effect than giving it.

It is true, the dangers of corticosteroids have been documented. But they appear to have some use in avian medicine. However, user discretion is imperative. Birds with respiratory illnesses

.....  
**After several cases it appeared that NOT giving dexamethasone had a worse effect than giving it.**  
.....



The radiograph of this Quaker parrot (in a bag) demonstrates a metal-dense object, enlarged liver shadow, loss of cardiac-hepatic waist and encroaching fluid over the heart.

## Bird in a Bag\*

Gwen Flinchum, DVM  
The Bird Hospital  
Lake Worth, FL

Avian radiographs are best done with the bird under anesthesia so the patient can be properly positioned. However, we have found that we can obtain a general overview radiograph by placing the bird in a paper bag and then placing the bag on the cassette. No anesthesia is necessary and, although the positioning is not always perfect, gross abnormalities are easily visualized. This is ideal for birds that are too sick for anesthesia but need a radiograph to help in disease diagnosis.

\* From *EXOTIC DVM Veterinary Magazine* Vol 3.5 and used with permission of Zoological Education Network 800-946-4782.

(other than lung edema) or immunosuppression should not be given corticosteroids. In addition, long-term use is contraindicated.

In our practice we basically have only used dexamethasone (Azium®, 2mg/ml) and our clinical experiences have

been positive. It is clear, however, that much further study and documentation is needed to better elucidate the effects of corticosteroids in birds to determine if these drugs can indeed be effectively employed in avian medicine.

## Conversion Tips

The following page offers suggestions for successful conversion of a bird to Harrison's Bird Foods. The page can be copied and distributed to clients who may be undergoing this change.



# Converting Your Bird to Harrison's

Birds converting to Harrison's Bird Foods from a seed diet should start out and remain on the High Potency Formulas for a period of at least six months.



## 1. Getting Started

- Discuss with your avian veterinarian what body weights are appropriate for your bird while converting the diet.
- Schedule an appointment with your avian veterinarian to discuss what pellets are best for your bird, and how you should approach switching the diet. You should also have a general health exam at this time to decide if your bird is healthy enough to undergo a diet change.
- Purchase an accurate gram scale and learn how to use it correctly. We use Ohaus® scales.
- Weigh your bird at the same time every morning for two weeks to establish normal fluctuations in weight. Report any serious fluctuations (10% or more) to your avian veterinarian.
- Start mixing half Harrison's and half the regular diet.
- Expect your bird to throw the pellets at you, scream, yell, and throw tantrums. Talk to your bird about its new diet — they do listen.
- As the bird starts to eat the pellets, gradually reduce the amount of the regular diet and increase the pellets.

## 2. Other Tried and True Tips

- Place a bowl of pellets near the highest perch. Most birds will eat from the highest bowl first.
- Let your bird see another bird that is eating pellets. We call this: "birdie see, birdie do."
- Feed the regular diet for 30 minutes in the morning, take it out and replace with pellets for the rest of day. At night feed the regular diet for 30 minutes if pellets are not eaten.
- Grind up the pellets in a blender, or buy a Mash product, and mix millet in the Mash. The bird HAS to go through the Mash to get the millet. This works well with smaller species (budgies, lovebirds and cockatiels).
- Mix your bird's favorite fruit into the pellets so the bird gets a mouthful of pellets with its fruit. Mushy fruit works best, as it sticks to the pellets very well. Remove after 4-6 hours to avoid spoiled food being eaten.
- If your bird continues to be leery of the pellets, remove all perches from the cage so the bird HAS to sit on the food dish.
- Try going back to hand-feeding a juvenile formula with a syringe and then rewean to pellets. This should be done only under the guidance of an avian veterinarian.

## 3. When All Else Fails

- Schedule an appointment with your avian veterinarian. He often converts birds to a new diet and can tell you some tricks he uses.
- Board your bird with your vet and allow his staff to switch the diet. This is often the best way to convert your bird!! Your vet will carefully monitor the bird's weight and health. Most birds switch diets very quickly when removed from the "comfort" of home, and your vet will have more experience with diet changes. This process also removes stress from owners who are nervous about creating adverse health effects if the bird does not immediately convert to the new diet.



**For the Health of Your Bird™**

# A Closer Look

## Parkinson's and Pesticides

*Adapted from information provided by Rachel Carson Council, Inc.*

It has been estimated that 60,000 people in the U.S. develop Parkinson's disease (PD) each year and that number is expected to climb as the population grows older. Two celebrities afflicted with the disease, Muhammad Ali and Michael J. Fox, have helped to bring public awareness to this condition.

The cause of Parkinson's disease remains unknown, but appears to be multifactorial. The onset may involve both a genetic predisposition as well as exposure to environmental toxic triggers or promoters. Researchers have proposed that defects in the enzymes that detoxify neurotoxins, including certain pesticides, appear to increase susceptibility. The incidence of PD increases with age.

Epidemiological studies have given preliminary implications of pesticide (insecticide and herbicide) exposure as a risk factor for developing PD. Chemicals suspected of involvement with PD include dieldrin, certain organochlorines and cholinesterase inhibitor insecticides, and



States like Maine see little reason to use agricultural chemicals. As a result, their organic produce industry flourishes and residents have minimal exposure to the potentially damaging effects of pesticides.

**A degenerative neurological condition has been related to chronic, low-dose pesticide exposure of agricultural workers. Should this present a concern for veterinarians?**

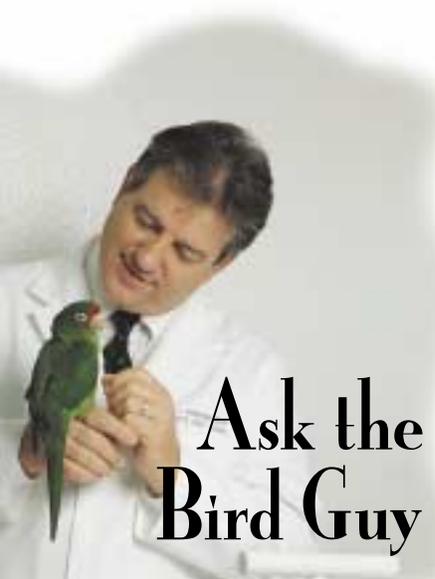
*Greg J. Harrison, DVM was recently elected to serve on the Board of Directors of the Rachel Carson Council, Inc (RCC). RCC can be contacted at 8940 Jones Mill Road, Chevy Chase, MD 20815, 301-652-1877, rccouncil@aol.com <[http://members.aol.com/rccouncil/ourpage/rcc\\_page.htm](http://members.aol.com/rccouncil/ourpage/rcc_page.htm)>*

paraquat, diquat and 2,4-D herbicides. Researchers at Virginia Tech are investigating the possible role played by combinations of insecticides in triggering or promoting Parkinson's disease, specifically the synergistic effects of the organophosphate chlorpyrifos and the pyrethroid permethrin. Military personnel serving in the Persian Gulf may have been exposed to such compounds.

A study of Californians newly diagnosed with Parkinson's disease found that people exposed to insecticidal pesticides in the home were 70% more likely to develop the disease than those who had not been exposed.

If, as seems possible based on preliminary data, there is an increased risk of Parkinson's disease from pesticide exposure, practitioners may want to reduce workplace contacts with veterinary insecticides. They may want to consider, as well, minimizing use of neurotoxic chemical pesticides in their own gardening or farming activities.





## Ask the Bird Guy

### Q Question:

Can any of your feeds be used in raising my little Japanese quail and my chicks?

### A Answer 1:

We have had excellent results in some jungle fowl.

### A Answer 2:

(response from another reader): I have been feeding my bantams Harrison's for years. I raise all of my chicks on the High Potency and my chickens do great. I thought I

was the only one crazy enough to feed Harrison's to my chickens as well as my parrots!

### Q Question:

My parakeet is sick and I'm supposed to be giving him some medications. It is so difficult to make him sit still and put the little syringe in his beak. Every time I get it in for a second, he moves his head and I miss again. Do you have any tips on how to do this more successfully?

### A Answer:

This is a common problem. The solution is to medicate the food. But the bird must be fed a formulated diet like Harrison's, because with seeds, medications will stick only to the hulls, which the bird does not eat. Water medications are a problem because birds don't like the taste and won't drink enough water, so they don't get the proper dose. Medicating via tube feeding or injections is

the best, but both of these are difficult for most owners.

Leaving the bird with the veterinarian is the last option. This obviously costs the most, but one needs to see this in light of other pets. Few people would give injections or struggle to tube feed a cat at home; rather, they would leave the animal with the veterinarian for best results.

### Q Question:

I am getting a cockatiel and was told about the your Mash product. Now I see that you also sell a Fine Grind for small birds. Which one should I use and why?

### A Answer:

Start with whichever product the bird will eat, because many birds will more easily switch first from seeds to Mash than directly to nuggets. However, because the Mash particles are not uniform in texture, birds have a tendency to sort out

their favorite shape and color. In this case, they unbalance the diet and may look like they are getting the wrong food. So ultimately, you will need to switch to Fine Grind.

### Q Question:

We have an 8-week-old African grey parrot that is starting to eat seed. We are still hand feeding him twice a day and want to switch him over to Harrison's feed soon. I was not sure if you had a juvenile food (solid) to substitute for the seed. If not, should we just buy the adult food for his transition?

### A Answer:

Yes, start him on the High Potency Coarse Grind, and follow the instructions on the bag to the letter. Most important: DO NOT FEED SEED. Seed-only diets are the major underlying cause of illnesses in birds.

Go to [www.Harrisonsbirdfoods.com](http://www.Harrisonsbirdfoods.com) for archived "Ask the Bird Guy" questions, primarily from bird owners.



## AVIAN MEDICINE BOOK

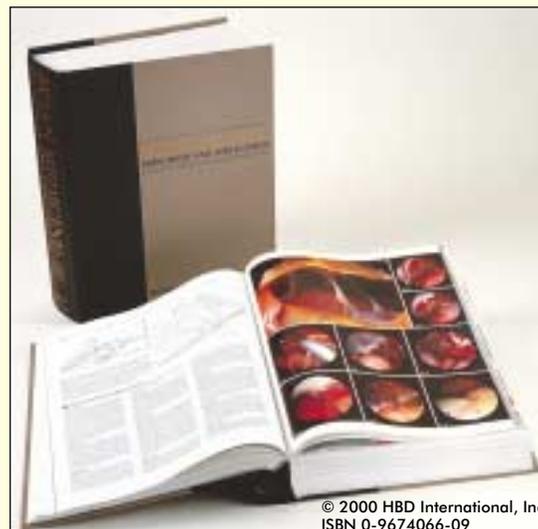
**Avian Medicine: Principles and Application** — THE classic avian veterinary reference to which all others are compared

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Acetate overlays sold separately \$15.

## The Avian Caregiver Now Online

The Avian Caregiver client newsletter about birds and using Harrison's Bird Foods is now available online only. Clients can be referred to <www.harrisonsbirdfoods.com> for direct access online, or practitioners may download each issue for printing and distribution as client handouts. It is provided in an Adobe Acrobat™ format, for which a free program file can be downloaded to access the publication. For questions, please contact Jean@harrisonsbirdfoods.com.

## Avian Discussion List

Our online discussion list, www.avianmedicine.net, is created for veterinarians only. A membership password is required and is available by sending a request via email to Jean@harrisonsbirdfoods.com.

## Avizyme®

Avizyme® is a source of live, naturally occurring enzymes to be used in parrots, pigeons and other birds. Indications may include birds with chronic pancreatitis, malabsorption syndrome, proventricular dilatation or neonates with slow crop-emptying time. Avizyme® may be beneficial in Day 1-7 neonates being hand-reared. It is also indicated in chronically ill or geriatric birds that seem to not be getting all the benefits from their food, or for sick birds under stress of illness.

# HBD

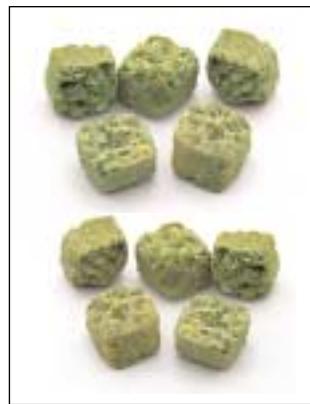
# NEWS



If the HBD hand-rearing formula appears too thick when the amounts of water and powder are used according to the recipe, a pinch of Avizyme® is added to the formula and allowed to stand after stirring to achieve the desired consistency. Do not add more water as that will dilute the nutrients in the hand-feeding formula.



This cockatoo chick shows malformation of the toes due to malnutrition. The breeder diluted the thick-appearing hand-feeding formula with water. This could have been prevented with the addition of a small amount of Avizyme® to liquefy the mixture without diluting the nutrients.



## Color Variations in the Food

Because Harrison's Bird Foods prohibit the addition of coloring to its foods — artificial or otherwise — the appearance of the end products depend on the colors of the whole ingredients used to produce them. Depending on the season, amount of rainfall in the area, and probably many other growing factors on the organic farms, the appearance of the food may change from time to time.

Alfalfa may be the single ingredient that most affects the color of the nuggets. When the alfalfa is harvested dark green, it imparts a dark, rich color to the food; some-

times it is a lighter color. This is nature we are dealing with — and whole ingredients rather than flours — and you can continue to depend on our not adding potentially toxic coloring agents to the food.



## Packaging Reminder

HBD requires that all Harrison's Bird Foods products be sold in their original packaging. HBD will not be responsible for claims that arise from repackaging.

## Indications for High Potency Formulations

High Potency products (either Fine Grind or Coarse Grind) should be the formulation of choice for several instances:

- A bird converting to Harrison's from any other food — a seed diet, particularly — or one recovering from an illness or under 6-8 months of age should start out and remain on High Potency for at least six months to a year.
- African greys can be maintained at all times on High Potency.
- Overweight Amazon parrots — they consume less volume of food because the fat content is slightly higher than Adult Lifetime formulas; thus, it satisfies their hunger sooner.



# Report on Organic Birdfeeding Science Project

Matt Tedesco  
Grade 5  
Nassau-Spackenkill  
Poughkeepsie, NY

During the school year we have participated in Classroom FeederWatch. We have learned how to identify birds by their sound and color. I also learned that birds are a big part of the food chain. One more thing that I have learned is some birds like certain feeders more than others. There are a lot of different kinds of seed but I am wondering if birds like organic seed or regular seed better. I think they will like the organic seed.

## Research

Organic gardening is done without using pesticides or synthetic fertilizers. The best way to grow organic food is to add organic material from compost leaves, grass clippings, and kitchen scraps like orange peels. If you grow organically choose plants that can grow in your climate. The organic farmers use good insects that do not eat the plants but they eat bad insects. That is how organic birdseed is made.

Organic birdseed is grown without using toxic chemicals that could harm birds. Farmers help keep our air, soil, and water, as well as our food supply, free of toxic chemicals to the birds. Organic gardeners don't use synthetic fertilizers or pesticides. Farmers provide a safer working environment for fieldworkers. That is how organic birdseed is grown.

## Statement of the Problem

Do birds prefer organic seed over non-organic seed?

## Hypothesis

I think more birds will prefer organic seed.

### Controlled Variables

Feeders, seeds, suet, bird counts

### Independent Variable

Type of seed used (organic or non-organic)

### Dependent Variable

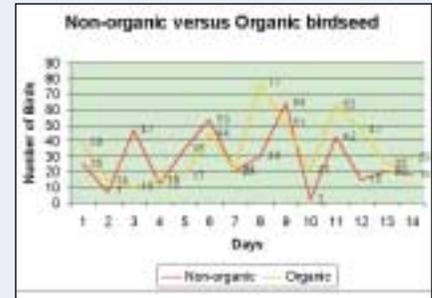
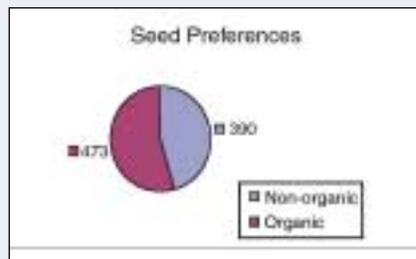
Numbers of birds

## Materials

- **Feeders:** including tube, dome, house, peanut cage, suet cage, ground feeder and platform feeder
- **Bird seed:** peanuts, suet, thistle, black oil sunflower, dried fruit, corn and mixed seed. Some of the seed is organic and some is non-organic seed.

## Procedure

First I put up feeders filled with non-organic seed for 14 days. Meanwhile I took bird counts. After the bird counts I took the non-organic seed out of the feeders and put the organic seed in the feeders for 14 days and then I took more bird counts.



## Conclusion

My graph shows the birds eating the organic seed more than the non-organic. My hypothesis is birds prefer organic seed. The graph supports my hypothesis. In a future study, I will compare more things with birds.

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HBD's Avian Examiner is brought to you as a service of HBD International, Inc., 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 Publications, 220 Congress Park Drive, Suite 232, Delray Beach, FL 33445 or fax to 800-279-5984.



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## The Results Speak for Themselves



One can easily see the difference in this Amazon before and after a diet change to Harrison's Bird Foods.

