

## Keeping Up Care for Pets in Troubled Financial Times

By Desi Milpacher

Making life easier and less expensive doesn't need to be painful – here are some tips that can be adopted for any economic conditions – they're just good sense.

**We all need to eat.** See if you can make a deal for your dry food with your local pet store - if you buy bulk they may provide a discount. You can then freeze it – most extruded kibble/pellet foods can be stored in this manner for up to a year.

**Sometimes they get sick.** Check into investing in pet insurance. For those with more than one bird, it may end up being cheaper than you think. It's not always for ongoing illnesses, but can be very helpful for any catastrophic incident that may happen. Please see:

**About.com: Personal Insurance**

<http://personalinsure.about.com/cs/petinsurance/a/aa051103a.htm>

**Pet Insurance Review**

<http://www.petinsurancereview.com/>

**Money.co.uk's Compare Pet Insurance**

<http://www.money.co.uk/pet-insurance.htm>

**PetInsurance**

<http://www.petinsuranceonline.co.uk/>

**They need something to do.** Toys needn't be expensive, either. As discussed in previous issues of Flock Talk, a lot of fun can be generated using bird-safe, inexpensive items from around the home. And some pet toy suppliers will sell parts in bulk as well. For more ideas please see Flock Talk issues [November 2008](#) and [January 2009](#).

**They need a place to call home.** If you have more than one bird (who doesn't!) you may house them in a separate building altogether. Providing lighting and heat can be expensive – and can be partially solved by installing solar panels and skylights. These are initially a bit costly, but pay for themselves over the long run, and are greener.

**They need something fresh to eat.** Growing your own fruit and vegetables (organically of course), buying locally or getting clean, older produce from larger grocers (so long as you use them immediately) is less costly and greener. And it's better for your birds.

**Home, part 2.** Keeping your aviary at a slightly cooler temperature (around 16-17C; acclimatize them to this of course) if they are not breeding will help lower costs.

**Out on a limb.** Use bird-safe (unsprayed, non-poisonous) wood for perches and browse found around your own property (no poaching of park trees now!)

**Ye olde barter system.** If you know of other parrot owners, some of whom excel at certain parrot related activities (toy making, birdie bread and other baking) you could employ a barter-and-exchange system (say, you grow the organic veggies in exchange for some toys or pet sitting). This can only be done if all parties involved (birds, people and other pets alike) are proven to be completely healthy, to reduce the risk of transmitting disease.

**Have some money-saving tips you can share?** We would love to hear them! Contact us at [flocktalk@worldparrottrust.org](mailto:flocktalk@worldparrottrust.org) or post them on our forums to let everyone know. You can find the '*Caring for Pets in Troubled Times*' WPT forum online at: <http://www.parrots.org/index.php/forums/viewthread/676/>

*Note: Please make sure your tips are reasonable and safe for parrots.*

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**About the author:** Desi Milpacher is editor of *Flock Talk* email newsletter for the World Parrot Trust, and has a diploma in Animal Health Technology (AHT) from Thompson Rivers University. She has also kept and studied parrots for 10 years.

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