

Parrot First Aid – Handling an Avian Emergency

GOAL: Assess and provide treatment for companion parrots in common emergency situations.

#1: Most valuable asset is you; remaining calm is important reassurance for your bird and helps you to think and act quickly and rationally. Go into hysterics when the emergency is resolved.

#2: A good working relationship with your avian veterinarian; have their phone number on your speed dial.

#3: Prepare yourself:

- Know how to handle your bird in a manner keeping you both safe.
- Assemble your first aid kit (*see below*).
- Review common emergency scenarios (*see below*).
- Ask your avian veterinarian what to do in case of an after-hours emergency (*another reason for your bird to be examined annually by his avian veterinarian*).

#4: Prepare your bird

- Teach your bird to recognize a “comfort” word or sound.
- Teach your bird to remain calm when being handled and towelled.
- Teach your bird to go into his carrier readily.
- Practice drills with your bird: Pressure on nails, feathers, lying on back, taking meds, syringing body parts, etc.

Most Common Avian Emergencies

1. Chronic or acute disease:

- Fluffed bird, trouble breathing, on the bottom of the cage

2. Injury:

- Flighted birds-flying into windows, doors, mirrors, TV's, any reflective surface, toilets, cooking pots, sinks, washers
- Clipped birds: Hard landing-keel, tail (esp. juveniles)
- Any bird: dog/cat/bigger bird encounters-ALWAYS an emergency due to bacteria in saliva of carnivores
- Humans-stepped on, sat on, laid on, shut in doors
- Broken blood feathers, bleeding nails

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Most Common Avian Emergencies, cont'd...

3. Toxins

- Respiratory (Inhaled): ANY overheated NONSTICK surface, aerosol sprays, paint or other chemical fumes, scented candles, etc.
- Dermal (Skin): nicotine, oils, chemicals
- Gastrointestinal (Ingested): Plants, food/drink (chocolate, alcohol, caffeine, avocado, salt), lead, zinc, chemicals, etc.

4. Reproductive:

- Egg-binding
- Cloacal prolapse

5. Miscellaneous:

- Egg-binding
- Seizures
- Burns
- Electrical shock
- Thermal injuries: overheating, hypothermia

Assembling a First Aid Kit

Here are some of the basic items you should have ready in case of an emergency situation. Time wasted looking for items can make the difference between life and death for your bird.

Items to include:

- Phone number for avian vet
- Phone number for 24-hour emergency avian vet
- Towel for securing the bird
- Cage for transporting to avian vet
- Magnifying glass for inspecting injuries
- Styptic Powder, cornstarch, flour
- Needle-nose pliers for removing broken blood feathers
- Wire cutters
- Tweezers
- Blunt-ended scissors
- Nail clippers
- Gauze pads, Telfa non-stick bandages
- Q-tips
- Vet tape
- Silvadene Cream for burns
- Nolvasan skin and wound cleaner
- Hand-feeding formula / Pedialyte
- Hot water bottle to keep bird warm