

WAES News

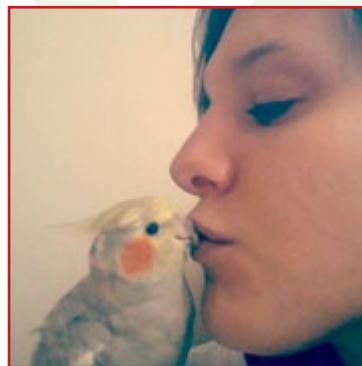
Wasatch Avian Education Society



http://www.dfostersmith.com/product/prod_display.cfm?pcatid=23092

MARCH SPEAKER Avian Nutrition by Nora Francis

Many parrot owners don't always know what's right to feed their birds. Since there are a variety of options available, it's important to know which options may be healthier than others. There are a lot of tips and tricks out there as well to help even the pickiest of eaters. Ensure you're feeding your birds highly nutritional food, and keeping their minds engaged in natural foraging behavior.



Nora served an avian internship with Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Kanab, and she is pursuing her second degree at Broadview University for Veterinary Technology. She expects to graduate this summer and become a full time tech at Parrish Creek Veterinary Clinic, where she currently works. She has a passion for parrots, learning, and conservation.

WAES CLUB MEETING

March 12, 2016

7:00 pm

Salt Lake County Complex

2001 S. State Street
Room N1100 (NorthBuilding)
Salt Lake City, UT 84190

You are Invited.

Our meetings are free and open to the public. We offer presentations, conversations and comradery with other parrot enthusiasts. Refreshments are provided and a raffle table is a special fundraiser benefit for birds in WAES foster care. Come see what our volunteer flock is all about.



REDUCING HORMONAL BEHAVIORS IN PARROTS

Well, it's springtime, which means that love is in the air for a lot of companion parrots.

There are a many things which will trigger hormonal surges in parrots, some of which include:

- * longer daylight hours; shorter nights
- * a perceived nest box
- * a perceived "mate"
- * high fat foods
- * warm, mushy foods
- * excess energy

If you have a hormonal parrot, you can try the following to reduce them:

- * Make sure that (s)he gets 12-14 hours of total darkness. If you can't provide that in their regular cage, get a sleep cage and put it in a separate room or closet with dark curtains or no windows.
- * If your hormonal bird has a happy hut, cardboard box, grocery bag, makes a tent out of newspaper, has access to a dark corner, or any other conceivable permutation of a nesting box, remove that stimulus from their environment.
- * If your bird regurgitates for you, masturbates on you, or if you pet your bird anywhere other than their head or feet, stop. Walk away any time your bird exhibits the aforementioned sexual behaviors, and restrict petting to head and feet only, as petting anywhere else on a horny bird can be mistaken as sexual advances. Make more of your interactions hands-off, like training sessions, so that your bird can redefine your role in their life. Make it clear that they are loved, but not, you know, LOVE-LOVED. ;-)
- * Most parrots in the wild will only breed when resources are abundant. The problem is that resources are *always* abundant in captivity. What an individual bird may perceive as abundance can vary, but in some cases high-fat and high-sugar diets can play a contributing factor. One thing you can try is providing your bird with a lower-fat, lower-sugar diet. More veggies, herbs and flowers; give berries as the only type of fruit; feed fewer seeds, nuts,

and grains (including pasta and pellets). BUT!! It's imperative that you make sure that your bird doesn't lose too much weight from a drastically reduced diet, so weigh them frequently and add back in a few soaked nuts, sprouted seeds, and higher-protein pseudo-grains like quinoa, amaranth, and buckwheat paired with a higher-protein legume such as black beans, if they are acting super hungry and/or losing too much weight.

5/26/13 EDIT: I will say that I have lately put my birds on a grain-free diet to see how they did, and it seemed that they all experienced a reduction in hormonal behaviors. Then, a couple of weeks ago, I ran out of their chop, so I ended up feeding them a birdie bread and pellets. Almost instantly, all five of them started up with hormonal behaviors again, and both females – one an Aru Eclectus and the other a Red Bellied Parrot – became super nesty. After about a week, I got a paycheck, went grocery shopping, and made more chop. Within two days, the nesting behaviors in the Red Belly ceased, and by the end of the week all other hormonal behaviors in the Red Belly and the males had ceased. My female Ekkie is still a little nesty, but she willingly comes out of the cage, steps up, and shows interest in playing and exploring again, which she had not been doing while on the birdy bread and pellet diet. A study of five is by no means comprehensive, but I find it interesting that the birds had such dramatic behavior shifts when on a diet high in grains. Whether that's due to the carbohydrates/sugars, or because grains are pro-inflammatory, or due to some other factor I don't know about, the results were quite apparent in my flock. So, that may be something else to consider and experiment with in your own flock.

- * During the mating season, birds will feed each other by regurgitating their food. Even though in most species it is primarily the male who flies off to forage for food then returns to the female in the nest to regurg for her, it still seems that warm, mushy foods can trigger male parrots as much

IN LOVE...



as females. Serve mash and chop cold; don't feed heated foods or warmed up birdie breads; don't offer anything by hand. Even during training sessions, you can offer treats by putting them in a spoon or a shallow dish instead of giving them by hand.

* Just as with people, making sure parrots get more exercise can and often will reduce excess sexual energy. Make sure your bird gets plenty of exercise every day. If they are flighted, train them to recall to you and do so until they are winded every day. If they aren't flighted, train them to flap their wings and do it every day until they're winded. Play with them. Train them. Get them to use their brains. Also, make them work for their food. Don't put anything in a bowl. Make them forage for everything. You can even make them forage for chop/mash by putting it in wax free paper cups and covering them with tissue paper. If they're having to expend energy and devote brain power to just obtaining food every day, that's a lot less energy left over to be in the mood for sexy time!

EGG LAYING: If a hen has already laid an egg, you have a few options:

1) If you know the egg is infertile, leave it and let the hen sit on it until she decides for herself that the eggs are infertile. In some cases, this will prevent her from laying more eggs and will more or less "get it out of her system" by letting the nesting process take its course—letting her do what hens do. This is a more practical option for birds who are not aggressively territorial over her eggs, obviously. If, however, she is so aggressive as to become difficult to care for, or if she keeps laying beyond the normal number of eggs in a typical clutch for her species (for example, in Eclectus, more than 2 eggs is abnormal, whereas Cockatiels can have up to 8 eggs in a clutch, so you wouldn't need to start worrying until 9 eggs or beyond), this is not the best option for your situation.

2) If there's any chance the egg(s) might be fertile, it is important to remove them, shake or boil them, and then you can elect to replace them. Then everything mentioned in Option 1 would apply here as well. One benefit I forgot to mention in Option 1 is that letting her sit on her eggs buys you some time while you try the hormone reducing tips above, so that when she does finally reject the eggs, she won't try to lay more. You will, however, need to supplement her diet with extra calcium during this process, since egg laying depletes her own body's calcium.

3) For hens who become extremely aggressive and territorial over their eggs, seem anxious or depressed, start plucking or self-mutilating, or continue to lay eggs beyond what is typical for her species, you can remove the eggs and try to make her chosen nesting site less nesty—or if necessary, prevent her from accessing it altogether. Unfortunately, that won't necessarily be enough of a dissuasion from certain species who lay eggs on the ground or on a cliffside; those little ladies will often lay eggs just about anywhere! But removing them and disrupting the nesting site might be enough of an upheaval that, again, it might buy you some time while the rest of the hormone reducing attempts take effect.

I know it sounds a little crazy to say, "You can either do this or do the exact opposite thing, and either might work," but the reality is that every bird is different and reacts to their environments differently. It's up to you to observe, assess, and act accordingly. Now at least you know the potential pros and cons of each choice.

Anyway, these are a few things you can try. Of course, hormonal behaviors are complex and many factors contribute, not all of which we have control over, so this article is just scratching the surface of this topic. Nevertheless, these strategies have worked very well for me with the majority of hormonal birds I've worked with. Very few have needed medical intervention afterwards. However, know that Lupron is an option, albeit a more last-resort option that does not come without potential side-effects. Have a discussion with your avian vet about whether or not this is a viable option for your bird. In general, though, if you really commit yourself to trying the options above, you will have a really good chance of finding some combination that reduces these behaviors. Good luck!

AFA DELEGATES

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WAES Delegate- Position Open

Visit www.afabirds.org to learn more about bird education, conventions, publications from a nationally recognized organization.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

**"The Key is Choice,"
A Behavior Seminar by Emily Strong**
March 24, 2016 at 6:30 pm
Dawgs'nWhiskers; 9177 S. 700 E, Sandy Ut.

April WAES Meeting
Speaker TBA
April 9-7:00 pm

AFA 42nd Annual Convention
"Conservation Works"

THANKS & GRATITUDE

Be involved. Make WAES Worthwhile.

The American Federation of Aviculture, Inc.
42nd Educational Conference & Avian Expo
Radisson Hartford - Cromwell, CT
HOTELS & RESORTS
Save the Date Aug 4 - 6, 2016
"Conservation Works"
www.AFABirds.org
Convention@AFABirds.org 281 217 0614

Keynote: Laney Rickman
Bird Endowment "Go Blue"

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What's new in aviculture

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