

Standards of Care For Parrots

Within A Rescue and/or Sanctuary Facility

Prepared by the Standard Committee dealing with care for parrots within parrot rescue and sanctuary facilities

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Introduction

This document is prepared by the Standards Committee dealing with care for parrots within parrot rescue and sanctuary facilities. Members of the committee are dedicated participants of the Gabriel Foundation's second conference in February, 2001 in Tampa, Florida . The aim was to create an international forum of representatives from different disciplines dealing with parrots in nature, in aviculture, as companion animals and in rescue organizations.

In May 2001 the Standards Committee was established with representatives of Parrot Rescue and Sanctuary Organizations, Avian Medicine and Parrot Behavioral Consultants.

Standards of Care for parrots within a rescue facility are developed for:

- those considering starting a parrot rescue facility. These standards will provide information, protocols and guidelines for long-term planning. People who start a parrot rescue impulsively can create problems for both birds and caretakers. This is a direct parallel to the owner that impulsively buys a parrot without proper information or education and long-term commitment.
- those who need to train and inform volunteers about the important factors dealing with the care of parrots.
- those active in parrot rescue to find the tools to do a better job in the future.
- those who need a tool to aid in fund raising, to show what is needed to manage a parrot rescue facility
- those who are considering giving their parrot to a parrot rescue facility to know what to look for and what kind of questions to ask prior to donating a bird.

These standards of care are the ideal. They are not meant to describe the current situation within parrot rescue facilities, or the average or minimum requirements. The ideal may be expensive. It needs the investment of time, people and money and may not be applicable to all situations, but that is what ideals are all about.

Some parts of the protocols must be detailed. The veterinary protocol prior to a bird's acceptance within a rescue facility must be thorough because accepting birds carrying contagious disease can jeopardize the health and welfare of the birds already under the care of the facility. Everything possible has to be done to prevent an outbreak of contagious disease.

Parrot Rescue and/or Sanctuary

Parrot rescues and sanctuaries are needed because people often purchase a parrot without realizing the potential consequences. Because of a lack of education, they often have unrealistic expectations about companion parrots, which then develop unwanted behaviors such as screaming, aggression, fear, feather plucking and so on, which often leads to the birds losing their homes.

Other reasons for donating birds to rescue and sanctuary organizations might involve changing financial circumstances or personal situations such as the illness or death of the owners.

Parrots donated to a parrot rescue or sanctuary as described within this document should not be used for any commercial purpose and should not be sold or transferred into a situation where commercial interest determines the policy of the facility.

Breeding parrots within a parrot rescue or sanctuary facility can be considered a commercial

purpose.

When there is no possibility of finding an adoption home, parrots in a sanctuary will spend the rest of their lives in the facility. To prevent problems over the long term, we need to offer them more than just a “safe house.” Long-term management and care must provide the best possible circumstances for a captive parrot to develop and express normal social psittacine behavior. Parrots need to feel comfortable not just among other birds but also among the humans that care for them. Wild parrots can show fear or aggression if they are not comfortable in their situation, and it takes time, understanding and dedication to solve these problems.

Rescue and sanctuary facilities are not responsible for the care of birds that are not part of the facility. ***No one can save them all.***

In addition to the time needed to care for the birds, time must also be spent in educational programs, providing information to prevent more parrots from being abandoned in rescue/sanctuary facilities. As part of the long-term policy of a rescue facility, members should enlist volunteers whose focus is on education and organizing educational programs, not just care of the birds.

A facility that has too many birds to allow the time to spend on prevention and education does not help the problem; it becomes a part of the problem. The more parrots are taken into a facility, the more the need to develop efficient educational programs to prevent further overpopulation.

The basic principle of care is the amount and the quality of the time spent caring for the birds. Quality care has less to do with money than the availability of time of dedicated people. Time is money and in this case, care is time. This can be compared with the care that is necessary in a nursing home or hospital. Without time, there is no care.

The time needed for care is a major factor that determines the number of birds that can be accepted and maintained by a facility. It is not acceptable to take in too many birds to provide the minimum amount of time per day per bird. Caring for captive parrots is a tremendous responsibility and a huge challenge. Every parrot is entitled to a stimulating, healthy environment whether the flock is human, avian or both.

Parrot rescue is all about time, priorities and long-term management, using common sense, protocols, regulations and standards. Each facility will need a lot of cooperative help, i.e. volunteers, available avian veterinarians and organizational and personal networking.

Some Basic Principles/Guidelines For Establishing A Rescue Facility and/or Sanctuary

- Ideally, rescues and sanctuaries should be part of an umbrella organization dealing with bird rescue.

- Birds should only be accepted in a facility when there is sufficient funding to establish a medical protocol and to provide basic care for each individual bird over the long term.
- The policies, aims and goals of the rescue or sanctuary should be available in a Mission Statement posted next to the regulations dealing with daily care.
- Ideally, the organization should have a board of directors with representatives of different disciplines (i.e., veterinary, behavioral, financial, educational, marketing/funding, legal, and/or construction experts) to ensure well-thought-out decisions based on knowledge, not just emotion.
- There should be a documented health protocol, adequate quarantine and testing for disease prior to a bird's entrance into a facility. It is acceptable to require that previous owners assume the costs of testing and have test results prior to admission of bird(s) to the rescue facility. If this is not possible, the facility's avian veterinarian must do physical exams as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of the facility's avian veterinarian and staff to prevent the introduction of contagious diseases like Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease [PBFD], Chlamydophilia ("Parrot Fever /Psittacosis"), Polyoma, or Pacheco's Disease. These diseases threaten the safety of all the birds within the facility, and it is not acceptable to have inadequate funding to provide necessary testing and quarantine. If there is inadequate funding for the proper care of a bird, the bird should not be accepted into the facility.

It is advised to have special housing, separated from the quarantine room for new birds, for diseased parrots for optimum care, treatment, evaluation and recovery.

- There must be a post-mortem done on every bird that dies within the facility with pathology samples to be sent to an official laboratory for testing.
- It is not acceptable to accept new birds when there is an outbreak of a contagious disease within the facility or the facility's quarantine.
- The facility should have a close relationship with one or more behavioral consultants to provide optimum care, attention and treatment for birds showing behavioral problems.

Welfare Committee

A committee can be established dealing with issues of nutrition, health, disease prevention,

welfare and behavioral problems. This committee can consist of an avian veterinarian, a parrot behavioral consultant and the manager or director of the facility.

Each rescue organization should have an avian veterinarian who is responsible for the health and the disease prevention policy of the facility and he/she should visit the facility on a regular basis as decided by the welfare committee.

Pre-Acceptance Policy For A New Bird

Owners must complete an intake application providing information about the background of the bird and the reasons for a bird's donation. The owner should sign a document that entitles the rescue facility to contact the owner's veterinarian to get that bird's medical records and those of any other birds the owner might have.

The rescue and sanctuary facility should investigate possibilities that may enable the owner to keep their parrot. When behavior problems are the major reason for donating a parrot, options and solutions can be offered to solve the problems and to create an improved relationship between the owner and parrot. Through education and counselling, the emphasis should be on preventing the bird from needing to enter the facility in the first place.

Owners are urged to contribute on a regular basis to the annual costs of taking care of the bird.

Identification

Ideally, all birds are individually identified with a leg band or microchip. Proper identification is an essential part of record keeping.

RECORD KEEPING

A. Individual records are kept on each bird which include: available records from the previous owner(s) and previous veterinarian(s), hatch date, breeder, species, weight, import or domestic, prior testing, current test results, identifying markings (including band number, and/or micro chipping), and vaccinations.

B. A document that transfers ownership of the bird to the rescue facility is kept in the permanent file. This document states clearly that all rights of prior ownership are terminated and the agreement is non-revocable.

C. Each incoming email or call is logged in and categorized in the program of the rescue and sanctuary facility and included in the database.

MEDICAL PROTOCOL PRIOR TO ACCEPTANCE OF A NEW BIRD

Introduction

Accepting a new bird in a parrot rescue facility is always a major decision with huge responsibilities for the new bird as well as for those already in the facility. A medical protocol must do everything possible to prevent the introduction of disease. Accepting new birds that are ill or are carriers of a contagious disease can cause mortality within the facility; therefore, a strict medical protocol prior to acceptance of a new bird is of critical importance for the health and welfare of all the birds already in the facility. Also, accepting a sick bird can also put a serious financial burden on the facility, so this should only be undertaken if adequate finances (from the previous owner and/or the facility) are available.

The Examination Of Birds Before Entering The Quarantine

It is important that every bird be properly examined and evaluated prior to being accepted by the facility. Birds often don't show external signs of illness despite the presence of disease. They hide symptoms as long as possible, so their behavior and activity can appear normal. This is a natural survival strategy, since birds that show signs of disease will be chased away by their own species and/or killed by predators. Some sick birds will even have a good appetite to compensate for weight loss.

It is practical to evaluate the bird in a systematic way, and the examination can be divided into different parts. Intake personnel admitting a new bird to the facility can do the initial part. The facility's avian veterinarian should do the remainder, doing any laboratory and diagnostic testing necessary.

First, it is vital to evaluate the bird from a distance and if possible, in a quiet area. The bird should be allowed to perch quietly, so its attitude and posture can be evaluated.

To be evaluated:

- Abnormalities of the nostrils and eyes
- Beak: quality of the beak structure and positioning.
- Respiration: Birds with respiratory problems will show abdominal respiration and tail bobbing. The beak should be closed during respiration.
- Both legs, toes and nails
- Marked abnormalities like hanging wing(s).
- Feather quality, abnormalities and moulting disorders.
- Vent or undertail feathers: should be clean, not soiled with droppings.
- Feces: color and consistency. Variations exist between bird species and diet, so adequate references must be available.
- Urine: contains two parts, a semisolid white portion and a watery portion. With an abnormal color, there is a suspicion of an internal problem. For example, liver problems can be suspected when the white urine portion is yellowish or green.
- If flight is possible, one can judge the way the bird can fly and whether the bird shows respiratory distress after its effort.

All evaluations must be noted in the bird's record.

Evaluation In The Hand

Every bird has to be evaluated in the hand, with all observations noted in the bird's record. The physical exam enables evaluation of the following:

- The head, both eyes, both nostrils, both ears
- Abnormal respiratory sounds
- Beak abnormalities.
- The throat and mucous membranes. Irregularities and any swellings must be noted, especially in amazons and macaws because of the possibility of papillomatosis.
- The neck and crop
- The breast muscles, evaluating the nutritional status (overweight or too thin).
- The breastbone/keel, evaluating calcification and any abnormalities
- Abdomen, looking for abnormalities. In small birds like finches, the abdomen can be

visualized by blowing away the feathers. The liver and the intestines can be seen through the skin.

- Evaluate wing bones and joints and compare with both wings spread
- The feathers, including tail feathers, for possible molting disorders
- The skin on different areas, especially observing the skin of the feet for abnormalities.
- The presence of body lice, feather lice and mites.
- Both legs and all toes and nails.
- The size and diameter of the legband, as over-sized bands can indicate a smuggled bird. The information on the legband should be recorded.
- The cloaca. In amazons and macaws it is important to look for abnormalities suspected for papillomatosis. Any irregularity and especially any swellings that resemble a raspberry may be suspected of papillomatosis.
- In budgerigars and other species, special attention is given to evidence of the presence of cnemidocoptes (“scaly face mites”), with typical white crusty skin and beak deformities with the appearance of a honeycomb.

Additional Examination Possibilities By The Avian Veterinarian

The avian veterinarian should also examine the bird from a distance and in the hand as described previously.

It is important to have an agreement that the adoption can be canceled depending on the results of the additional examination by an avian veterinarian. If there is any indication of the presence of an untreatable contagious disease, the bird must not be accepted into the rescue facility.

- Each new bird must have its species identified, and be weighed.
- Fecal exam: It can be investigated microscopically and/or via different staining techniques, noting the presence of internal parasites, bacteria, mycosis (fungus) and yeast. A culture for bacteria, mycosis and viruses can be done.
- Swabs can be taken out of the throat, crop, cloaca, conjunctiva and skin, looking for parasites, bacteria and mycoses. A swab taken from the cloaca can be investigated for chlamydia and polyomavirus. Testing for chlamydia is especially important because of the potential health risk for humans.
- A blood test can be done for Beak and Feather Disease [PBFD], paramyxovirus and other diseases. A blood panel can also be done to evaluate for internal medical problems. A blood smear can be done to evaluate the blood cells and look for possible blood

parasites.

- A radiological investigation can give extra information (i.e., in looking for signs of Proventricular Dilatation Disease [PDD]. Testing for PDD is in development).
- An endoscopic investigation can be done to look into the airsacs, to determine the sex, and to evaluate the internal organs. It is also possible, using the endoscope, to evaluate the trachea, oesophagus and cloaca. Biopsies may be needed to diagnose diseases such as papillomatosis in amazons and macaws.

THE QUARANTINE PERIOD

Proper quarantine is critical in any situation where there are already birds in a facility. Quarantine is defined as a period in which a bird is isolated to minimize the potential of spreading contagious diseases to other birds in the facility. For many contagious avian diseases, most quarantine periods are too short to guarantee the absence of disease. Due to the possibility of a carrier state, no quarantine can guarantee there will be no introduction of contagious disease. However, proper quarantine is still imperative. It is advisable to have a minimum of 90 days for quarantine and to use this period to observe and examine the birds repeatedly for possible diseases before they enter the facility. When birds get in contact with new birds entering the quarantine space, the quarantine period need to be extended. When testing for PBFD, it is advisable to recheck a negative bird after 90 days.

- There must be a separate space for the quarantine period to prevent any direct or indirect contact between new and current residents. The quarantine room should be easily cleaned and disinfected and ideally should have a separate ventilation system. Personnel should care for the birds in quarantine last, and change their clothing and shoes after visiting the quarantine area.
- New birds should have time to acclimatize to the new circumstances. It is important to realize that changing homes creates a stressful situation for birds, making them more vulnerable for problems. Consequently, circumstances should be as good as possible for a new bird. For example, the ambient temperature in quarantine should be a little higher than the ambient temperature in the bird's previous home.
- Quarantine enables the observation of new birds. New birds should be weighed daily, first thing in the morning on an empty crop. Weight loss can be the first and only finding of a bird having problems, so daily weights should be recorded in the bird's record. Birds should not be treated for disease indiscriminately, and most of the diseases can be found or excluded by means of an examination.
- If a bird dies during the quarantine period, it is essential to determine the cause of death through post mortem (autopsy) and histopathological evaluation.

Housing & Feeding During Quarantine

When birds are accepted in a facility, it is vital to have information concerning housing in the previous home, and whenever possible or feasible, these conditions should be duplicated. It is also critical to have information about the bird's previous diet. Initially, it is often best to continue with the previous diet. Once the bird is responding well, any necessary dietary conversions can be implemented. During the quarantine period, birds can then get accustomed to the foods that are used at the facility. To prevent problems over the long term, the quality of the food is very important. Ideally, birds should be provided with certified organic pelleted diets, fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and sprouts.

Conclusion

All preventive measures taken during the quarantine period are in the best interest of the birds entering the facility, as well as current resident birds. It is especially important to protect the birds in a facility against contagious diseases. The costs for preventive measures should be calculated as part of the costs of taking care of a new bird.

An epidemic can have serious consequences in the future. This issue is especially important dealing with viral diseases without an available treatment. Parrots that test positive for an untreatable contagious disease cannot be accepted into a facility.

LONG-TERM MEDICAL PROTOCOL

- Every bird is weighed at least three times a year and more often if indicated. Because of great differences within the same species, evaluating the weight will help determine the individual condition. Birds that are too thin or too heavy should be monitored more often.
- During moulting of wing and tail feathers, the birds should be closely monitored for any moulting disorder. If birds are housed outside, fecal samples should be examined for parasites and bacterial and/or fungal infections every two months.
- If there is any indication of disease during the daily inspection of the birds, birds should

be seen by an avian veterinarian immediately, and any diagnostics and treatment done that the veterinarian deems necessary.

HOUSING STANDARDS FOR AVIAN RESCUE AND/OR SANCTUARIES

Introduction

Proper housing is critical for the welfare, well-being and physical and emotional health of parrots within rescue/sanctuary facilities. The best care for birds in a facility will depend upon adherence to the following protocols:

Standards for permanent sanctuaries should be more rigid than for rescue centers that adopt out. Basic principles for both, however, should include:

1. Ample space
2. Environmental enrichment
3. Safety
4. Opportunity for interaction with caretakers and with other compatible birds.
5. Close supervision
6. Hygienic environment

Ideally, as for all captive animals, a natural habitat setting is preferred. Birds were designed to fly, and when possible, should be given the opportunity to do so in a protected area. For psittacines, this would ideally be a large enclosure set up as a rainforest environment where the birds can live comfortably as close to nature as possible, with enough space to make continuous and sustained flight. Since this is not feasible in most situations, nor is free-flight advised for birds who are to be adopted into a non-flight situation, there are a number of acceptable alternative housing protocols.

One such option is to construct large flights, housing a few compatible birds and enhanced with non-toxic branches, safe toys, swings, and various sized perches. In addition to horizontal perches, parrots also enjoy slanting, sometimes thin, branches on which to sit. There are few horizontal perches in nature. Also providing perches of various heights, including a level where the birds can perch to receive treats from the caretakers hand, can greatly enhance the bird/caretaker relationship.

is advisable.

The optimal material for all cage or habitat wiring is stainless steel. If this is not possible,

galvanized wire should be weathered outside for two to three months and washed down with white vinegar before use, to remove as much of the zinc coating as possible. The wire should be of the appropriate gauge and size for the species to be housed in it.

Outdoor Housing

Outside cages should be double wired to prevent attacks from raccoons, opossums, cats, dogs, snakes, rodents, etc. Screening is advised to protect from mosquitos and other insects. Smaller cages can be placed inside a large screen enclosure. If outdoor cages extend to the ground, cage floors should be wired to prevent predators from digging under and into the enclosures.

Security is essential. Double cylinder deadbolt locks should be used on all outdoor cages or on all doors leading to the outside. Double doors should be used on all outside cages and flights to prevent escape.

If ponds or fountains are used, they should be no deeper than the length of the legs of the smallest bird in the enclosure and should have a non-slippery bottom.

Outside facilities should have walls and/or trees and bushes as a sound barrier if there are nearby neighbors. It is also advisable to have a location, design, or camouflage that prevents passersby from knowing that birds are there if the area is prone to theft.

Outside cages should offer protection from the elements such as rain, wind, sun, cold, heat, etc. Indoor and outdoor facilities should also offer protection from toxic substances such as swimming pool chlorination vapors, lawn sprays, heated non-stick cookware, commercial potting soil, scented candles, insecticides, aerosol sprays, cigarette/cigar/pipe smoke, etc.

Indoor Housing

If the birds must be housed indoors or if space does not permit large flights, they should be allowed out of cage time daily, for as long as possible. They should be taken outdoors in good weather, as it is important for them to have access to unfiltered sunlight (not necessarily sunshine) whenever possible. In this case, wings must be clipped and they must be supervised at all times. Indoors, full spectrum lighting is preferred.

When birds are housed indoors, there should be appropriate heating and cooling systems and adequate air filtration and air circulation systems. Feather dander can quickly clog air filters and vents, thus rendering the heating or cooling system useless. Additionally, disease pathogens can easily spread in areas not properly ventilated.

In multiple bird situations, care must be taken to introduce newcomers. Many birds tend to become territorial and often do not readily accept a new addition, so new birds must be introduced slowly. A bird in a cage should never be placed in an area where there are uncaged birds, unless the cage is double-wired to prevent toes from being bitten.

MINIMUM Cage Sizes:

- Parrot species need a minimum of 2-3 x the wingspan in width and depth:

Large species (large macaws and cockatoos): 6 ft. x 9 ft.

Medium-sized species (Amazons, greys, smaller cockatoos): 3 ft. x 3 ft.

Small parrot species (budgerigars ["parakeets"]): 24 in.x 36 in.

Small birds are often more active than large species and therefore need more space, relative to size.

Species with longer tails and/or crests need cages high enough to allow easy clearance of these structures – i.e., large macaws need a minimum cage height of ~4+ feet.

Whatever the type of housing, there should be close supervision when the birds are out of their cages, as behaviors are often unpredictable.

Whenever there are choices to be made, common sense and compassion should prevail.

Additional Suggestions

- Housing and climate control should ensure an average of 15 degrees Celsius (60 degrees Fahrenheit) for healthy birds. Sick birds often need a higher minimum ambient temperature. The same is true for parrots that are serious feather pickers, especially when skin is exposed. Healthy parrots can be comfortable outdoors with lower temperatures when a warm indoor space is available.

Depending the species, care takers should also be aware of situations where the temperatures are too high and the humidity is too low..

- Providing one or more compatible companions with which to socialize (not necessarily of the same species, or opposite gender) can often help a parrot feel more secure.
- Plates on the cages or aviaries can be provided, with information about the individual birds such as species, name, sex, age, length of time in rescue , country of origin. This will

enhance interaction between caretakers, volunteers and visitors.

BASIC CARE OF PARROTS WITHIN A RESCUE FACILITY

The time needed to provide necessary care depends upon circumstances, such as the type of housing, the species, behavior problems and physical condition. Obviously, sick parrots and those with behavior problems need more attention and care. Parrots kept in groups, in larger aviaries or otherwise, need less individual time.

Depending on circumstances, one person can properly care for 10-25 parrots per day.

- Daily attention is important for every individual bird. It is an essential part of daily care to call birds by their names and, whenever possible, to answer contact calls.
- Tame parrots can be kept in larger aviaries where they can fly and create positive relationships with other birds. This does not necessarily detract from their relationship with their caretakers.
- Feeding should be done twice a day in safe and protected feeding cups. The amount and content of the food depends on individual species and individual needs. A nutritionally dense diet should include the daily feeding of high quality certified organic pellets plus a combination of whole grain/legume mashes, freshly germinated sprouts, fresh vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds and treats. Essential fatty acids or supplements may be added as determined by the avian veterinarian or avian nutritionist.
- Clean drinking water should be provided at least twice a day in safe and protected water cups.
- Showering and misting are important, as well as exposure to rain when possible. Parrots kept indoors need to be misted at least weekly, to reduce the amount of dust in the air and to humidify the mucous membranes.
- Food and water dishes should be washed daily in a sanitizing dishwasher.
- Each morning the head caretaker should visually examine each bird.
- Disinfectant footbaths (i.e., 1:30 bleach solutions) should be located outside quarantine rooms, and changed at least daily.

- Rodent control can be achieved with multiple barriers including rodent-detering cones on the legs of the flight cages, rodent-proof wire and rodent-proof buildings. Humane traps can be used, if necessary. All food should be stored in a manner that prevents rodent contamination.
- Cages, flights and floors are cleaned daily with soap and water. A schedule for disinfection is based on the advice of the facility's avian veterinarian.
- With outdoor flights, it is important that wild birds and rodents are not able to find spilled food. Since rodents and wild birds can spread contagious diseases through their feces, fecal contamination of water or food supply can become a serious health threat. Food and water supply should be protected from any type of contamination.
- Feeding wild birds on the premises of a rescue facility should be avoided or prohibited to decrease the potential for disease exchange.
- Birds should be given the opportunity for 10-12 hours of sleep in a darkened area each night.

PROTOCOL DEALING WITH PARROT BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

Introduction

Behavioral problems are a major reason for owners to donate their parrot to a parrot rescue facility. The most common behavioral problems are screaming, aggression/biting, feather destruction, phobic behavior and making a mess.

In general, there is a lack of awareness that, when we are dealing with parrots, we are dealing with non-domesticated animals that are kept in captivity. Without understanding normal behavior in the context of a non-domesticated animal, many owners consider normal parrot behavior as a problem. Many owners also underestimate the high intelligence of parrots. Therefore, when normal behavior is misunderstood and parrot intelligence is underestimated, a wide variety of behavioral problems is apt to occur depending upon the individual parrot, species and circumstances surrounding the bird.

Every person in parrot rescue has a responsibility to learn/know which behaviors are normal for each species (in general; there are always exceptions). It is then a major responsibility for those in parrot rescue to educate owners about options available to them other than donating their parrot to a rescue facility.

Protocol

Although it is not possible to describe all the different possibilities dealing with each parrot and each species, there are some common guidelines to follow when dealing with parrots having behavioral problems.

The most important aspect of dealing with parrots is the attitude of the person or persons caring for the parrot. A basic protocol for caretakers of parrots having behavioral problems can be summarized in five steps. This protocol can be used with any parrot showing any behavioral problem.

1. Establish yourself as a leader and teacher through nurturing guidance. You must convince the parrot that you are in charge through your confidence and self-assurance. Parrots feel comfortable with people who are comfortable with parrots and with themselves. Your interaction around the parrot will tell him all about you.
2. Show unconditional love. Tell him how beautiful his feather-picked feathers are and how precious he is to you. Tell him that you love him every day, and mean it.
3. Teach, Teach, Teach. Activate his intelligence by sharing, in detail, what there is to see around him, i.e. birds in the trees, toys on the table, colors, shapes, sizes, objects. Make him feel important. Parrots truly enjoy a good conversation, no matter who's doing the talking, but especially if it's someone they admire and that someone is talking to them! You talk (teach) and they WILL listen.
4. Ask him to participate in the learning process by offering him new, small, unthreatening objects to investigate. Praise each positive move. Each time you present your hand for a "step-up" and he does it, praise him enthusiastically.
5. Encourage and support his feelings. When he fears a place or object, be understanding and leave the place or object and try again later today or tomorrow. Soon he will accept it. Then tell him how brave and wonderful he is. Each time he overcomes a fear, praise him for it. This will help to stimulate the self-esteem all parrots need to develop normal parrot behavior.

It is critical to always use the five points in the right order and never start with point four or five

or only show that you love the parrot. The whole protocol takes about two minutes.

The minimum length of high quality time spent per day with a parrot experiencing behavioral problems is 20 minutes. More is better. Working with a bird for ten minutes a day, 2-3 times a day can make all the difference in the world.

EDUCATION

Education is a major part of the task of parrot rescue. Education should focus on improving the public's awareness about the needs of parrots everywhere including those in captivity, whether in retail, breeding, and rescue and sanctuary organizations. Some suggestions are:

1. Provide informational programs and materials to the public, including retail stores and bird clubs, via aviary tours, educational packets, newsletters, websites, written and e-mail correspondence, publications and journals, and telephone support and counseling. Work with local and regional school districts, community colleges, veterinary technician programs and veterinary schools.
2. Welcome interested public/rescue/sanctuary/welfare organizations and members to participate in hands-on care of aviary birds
3. Conduct volunteer weekends and educational events
4. If possible, have monthly classes in parrot care

Professional Affiliations

Representatives of parrot rescue organizations should participate in conferences and meetings dealing with parrot rescue and parrot welfare issues. Parrot rescue organizations should be members of conservation organizations such as the WPT and RARE to emphasize the need to take care of parrots in nature as well as in captivity. Parrot rescue organizations can organize or participate in local meetings, at least once a year, to educate the public about the need of parrots in captivity as well as in nature.

Acknowledgements and References

Mission Statement, provided by Jo Gore, Birdlove Avian Sanctuary

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Standards of Care of Maui Animal Rescue and Sanctuary (MARS), provided by
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Sharman Hoppes, DVM, personal communications

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Guidelines of the Avian Rescue Association (ARA), provided by Dottie Schira

