



Medical Center For Birds

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Feather Care

Well-preened and maintained feathers are important for insulation, waterproofing, aerodynamic efficiency and effective social communication. Most birds spend a significant amount of their daily activity budget on feather care activities, and this amount of time invested is normal and important. Your efforts to enhance, modify and guide feather care can enrich your bird's daily maintenance behavioral activity schedule feather damaging behavior.

- Watch your bird's body language for signals that they do not like being misted. Body language will vary based on the species and individual parrot, but if you notice any attempts to escape or avoid the spray bottle, or growling/vocalizing, please do not force your bird to be misted. There are several other methods of bathing that will promote preening that your bird might enjoy.
- If your bird is ill, fearful or has other medical concerns, misting may not be appropriate.
- Mist your bird lightly in a manner and schedule that is accepted by your bird, and that adds to its daily life and activities. Misting is supposed to be a good thing, not a bad thing! A light misting merely implies superficial dampening of the feathers enough to guide the bird towards more normal preening activity for a short time period.
- Misting can be combined with time that is shared with your bird out on a training perch. This combines social interaction with feather care, and the combination of these two categories can enhance the lifestyle and welfare of your parrot. The goal is enrichment, welfare and happiness!
- Other ways to encourage your bird to bathe include offering a shallow dish inside the cage or out while socializing with you. You might also try showering with your bird and there are even commercially available perches for the shower. Some birds even prefer to bathe under running water!
- Over the Counter products: There are considerable numbers of products marketed to enhance the feather appearance of your bird or stop feather damaging behaviors. Some of these have ingredients that are far from "natural" to be applied to feathers. Some are realistically appropriate for mammals only – not birds. Overall, most of these products will

not help, do not teach or enrich alternative activities and behaviors, and some can cause harm. In general, we recommend water as your misting agent, and the money that you save by not purchasing some of these commercially offered sprays can be better applied toward toys or other environmentally enriching products.