

Feather Destruction and Stress: How the Environment Impacts Feather Damaging Behaviour

1. What is Feather Damaging Behaviour?

Feather Damaging Behaviour (FDB) is a behaviour where parrots **chew, bite or pull feathers** with the beak, leaving damage to the feather or skin, as well as **missing feathers**.^[1] This can happen for a number of different reasons including; poor health or disease, genetics, age, sex or **stress**.



2a. The type or species of the bird can also impact the display of FDB.^[5]

2. Sources of Stress?

Parrots get stressed very easily and by several different things such as their physical environment, time spent socializing, lack of activities and toys or by **the way that they were raised!**^[2] The parrots can also impact the way they deal with stress through **different coping styles**^[3] or **personality traits**^[4]



3. Importance of Enrichment
Enrichment is one of the key ways that FDB can be reduced. Most cases of FDB are caused by excessive preening as a **coping strategy** for **lack of interest/boredom**.^[6]



5. The Unknown

The study of FDB is one that is still full of holes. This still includes finding more information about how humans can influence FDB, if FDB is done purely out of boredom or if frustration plays a role, how groups with different male to female ratios differ between species, or if FDB is learned while the parrots are young or if they do it only during adulthood.



4. Internal Impacts

The impact of stress is not only limited to the feather destruction, which is easily seen. The stress is found to have effects on the parrots **immune system, hormonal balance, circulatory system** and **neurologically**.^[7] The hormones appear to be the largest indicator as stress related hormones are much **higher** during stress periods!^[8]

Majorly Impacted Areas

Wings

Chest

Tail

