

FEATHER DAMAGING BEHAVIOUR IN PET PARROTS

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WHAT IS FEATHER DAMAGING BEHAVIOUR(FDB)?

- Feather damaging behaviour is when birds chew, pluck, and damage their own feathers and can arise as a response to stress [1].
- This behaviour is common in many pet parrots (estimate of 10-15% of pet parrot population) and can be very harmful [2].

WHAT CAUSES FDB?

FDB has been seen to be associated with stress and parrots in the wild are seen to rarely show FDB [1,3]

Parrots that were raised by humans during early development were seen to have a greater chance of developing FDB than those raised by their parents [1].

The stress hormone corticosterone was found to be greater in levels in birds with FDB [1].

Factors that can increase stress levels are:

- lack of proper nutrition [2]
- small housing spaces [2]
- lack of social interaction with owners and parrots of the same species [2]
- lack of enrichments such as foraging opportunities [2]
- sexual frustration [2]
- irritants in the air (ex. cigarette smoke) [2]
- presence of predators such as a cat [2]

WHY IS FDB HARMFUL?

This behaviour may be linked to poor welfare and can be an indicator of skin diseases that cause the skin to be itchy or irritated [3].

It can also create health issues such as damage to tissue, hemorrhages (loss of blood due to damaged blood vessels), infections, and may even cause hypothermia [3].

The psychological well-being, as well as the physical well-being of the pet parrot, can be negatively affected by FDB [3].

Visible damage from FDB can lead to pet parrots having to be sent to rescue centers [3].

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS TO PREVENT FDB?

Although not completely, FDB can be prevented with certain measures:

- a well-balanced diet that consists of seeds, fruits, and vegetables [2]
- an increased cage size [2]
- spending more time with the parrot and allowing interactions with same species [2]
- enrichment objects such as toys that are stimulating and provide foraging opportunities [2]
- refraining from touching the bird in areas that can be perceived as sexual [2]
- removing either irritant from the area of the parrot [2]
- positioning cages so the parrot can see the room well [2]
- applying physical restraints such as a collar to prevent plucking [2]



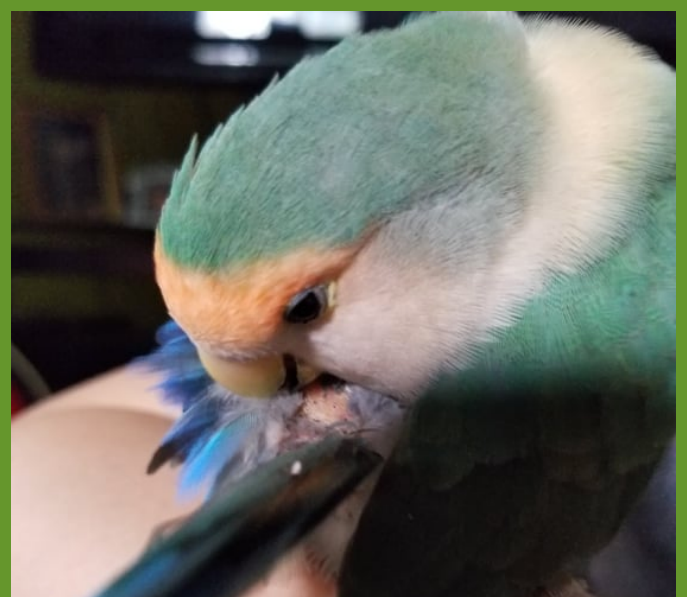
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WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW ABOUT FDB?

In 2008, about 10 million parrots were kept in households as pets in North America alone [3].

The popularity of pet parrots is increasing over the years with parrots being the third most popular pet animal after dogs [4].

This means that for both current and potential parrot owners, it is crucial to know about this common behaviour that negatively affects the health of the pet parrot, and how to deal with it.



References

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