



# Feathered Friends

The Newsletter for Parrot Lovers

## *The Right Balance in Avian Nutrition*

-By Gena Everhart

### Inside this issue:

<i>Parrot Q &amp; A</i>	2
<i>Birds Available at The Birdie Boutique</i>	2
<i>Introducing: Dr. Gregory Burkett</i>	3
<i>Clean Environment = Healthy Bird</i>	3
<i>Birdie Boutique Specials &amp; Coupons</i>	4

One of the most important things to learn about your parrot's health is the right balance of foods for optimal nutrition.

Without the proper balance, your bird could suffer from all kinds of health problems. Dr. Gregory Burkett believes that your parrot's primary needs will best be met by feeding 90% complete nutrition pellets such as Roudybush, with the other 10% of the diet consisting of seeds, nuts, fruits and vegetables as treats.

The difficulty most parrot owners encounter with supplying nutritional needs through a pelleted diet for their birds, comes when birds are accustomed to eating seeds as their only food. Given a choice, parrots will choose seed over pelleted foods just as a child would choose a serving of candy over a serving of broccoli. Many owners find it hard to resist the urge to offer seeds when the parrot appears to be starving himself by turning up his beak at pellets.

What those owners must realize, is that they are doing their birds no favors by allowing them to manipulate their owners into offering them their favorite food—seeds.

Dr. Burkett recommends the following methods for switching your bird over to a primarily pelleted diet for good health: 1) offer pellets in the food bowl in the highest position in the cage as that is the preferred location for most birds; 2) offer only about 1 tablespoon of seed in the lower food dish twice daily; 3) offer another type of treat in the afternoon such as vegetables or fruits; 4) stay with this routine for one week.

Observe your birds eating habits during this time to see that they are eating the pellets; 5) when the bird begins eating pellets, discontinue serving of seeds in the morning. Place pellets in both dishes; 6) lower the amount of seeds offered while increasing the amount of pellets offered until the bird is offered seeds only as treats once daily with fresh vegetables and fruits offered at the other treat time. Your bird



should now be primarily eating a pelleted diet. Continue to monitor your bird's eating habits and weight. Close monitoring is extremely important to assure that your bird is eating sufficient amounts.

Remember to vary fruits, vegetables and nuts as treats. For example, if your bird refuses to eat raw carrot pieces, offer slightly cooked pieces instead. That may be all that is needed for your parrot to benefit from the nutrition offered. By following this nutritional advice, you can rest assured that you are doing everything possible to enjoy a long and happy relationship with your parrot.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Special points of interest:

- What is Polyoma Virus?
- Cleaning Your Bird's Cage—the Easy Way!
- **Group meeting for companion parrot lovers! Hosted by The Birdie Boutique, Thursday, March 13th at 7:15 pm. See page 4 for further details. Come join the fun!**

## Parrot Questions and Answers

-By Dr. Gregory Burkett



*What temperature should you maintain for your parrot's health and well-being?*

*Q:* Hi , I have searched and searched to find the temperature tolerances for an African Grey Parrot. I live in Southern California and the temperature can get down to 50 degrees inside the house. Summer time around 90 degrees. Can my African Grey Parrot tolerate these temperatures?

*A:* Birds can tolerate cold much better than heat. Our parrots are no different from the wild birds that withstand harsh conditions. Those birds seek out shelter to protect them from the elements. For parrots, you must provide that shelter for them as wind and rain in the cold can quickly lead to frost bite. As to withstanding heat, a bird can overheat very rapidly in 90°F or higher without a means for cooling. Too much heat can be fatal.

Feathers are a wonderful insulator but cannot do the entire job in protecting your parrot from cold and heat. Your bird depends on you to provide sufficient protection from harsh weather conditions. They can enjoy the out of doors as long as you provide the right environment.

*Q:* If my bird never leaves my home, why should he be vaccinated against the polyoma virus?

*A:* Polyoma virus is spread by bird dander, bird droppings, and respiratory secretions among other things. The virus lives outside the bird's body for extended periods of time. Direct contact is not required to infect your birds. Exposure to a bird that is shedding the virus can happen through walking into your local pet shop. You bring the virus home on your clothing or person. If your bird is not vaccinated against the virus, the effect on your beloved pet can be fatal. We highly encourage annual vaccinations against the virus to protect your birds. Many owners like to take their parrots with them when they travel and on outings for proper socialization. Vaccination against the virus is especially important in these cases but it is important to know that these are not the only circumstances where your bird can contract the virus and become infected. Be safe, not sorry. Get your parrot vaccinated.

## The Birdie Boutique Bird Difference

-By Gena Everhart

**Our baby parrots are extremely well-socialized from the time they are hatched. This makes a huge difference in companion parrots.**



*Just one of the beautiful babies available at The Birdie Boutique now.*

You've finally made the decision that a parrot is the right pet for you and your family. You've done your homework on the different types of parrots available and you know what you're supposed to look for in a prospective pet parrot. It's time to choose a bird. What now?

May we make a case for choosing your bird at The Birdie Boutique? As Dr. Gregory Burkett says, "Our baby parrots are extremely well-socialized from the time they are hatched. This makes a huge difference in companion parrots."

Why a well socialized parrot? This makes for a companion parrot that looks forward to human contact, is less likely to bite, is more confident and comfortable in various situations and therefore, less prone to behavior problems such as feather picking and chewing.

Says Dr. Burkett "Our birds are handled by all types of visitors to the shop every day. They become accustomed to this and look forward to the affection humans offer them."

No matter where you buy your companion parrot, look for well-socialized, healthy, curious birds to assure you're getting a life-long affectionate companion.

Available now at The Birdie Boutique:

- Black Headed Caiques
- Umbrella and Bare Eyed Cockatoos
- Blue Front and Lilac Crowned Amazons
- Jenday Conures
- Timneh African Greys
- Senegals
- Jardines (poicephalus) parrot
- Parrotlet
- Cockatiels
- Finches
- Canaries
- Many others available soon

## Introducing: Dr. Gregory Burkett

### ABVP CERTIFIES DIPLOMATE IN AVIAN PRACTICE

NASHVILLE, TN -- Gregory Burkett, DVM, of Chapel Hill NC has been certified as a Diplomate by the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners (ABVP) specializing in Avian Practice.

Dr. Burkett mastered a rigorous and demanding application process and certification examination in order to obtain Diplomate status. To qualify to sit for the extensive, two-day examination, a veterinarian must complete either a residency program or six years of clinical veterinary practice. In addition, two case reports, references, descriptions of practice procedures, and professional education records must be submitted and pass review. This year's examination was given in Chicago, IL.

Dr. Burkett is a graduate of the North Carolina

State University College of Veterinary Medicine, and has a special interest in pediatrics and surgery. Dr. Burkett practices at Four paws Animal Clinic d.b.a. Avian Veterinary Services located at 1216 Raleigh Road in Chapel Hill NC. He is a member of the Association of Avian Veterinarians and The American Veterinary Medical Association.

The American Board of Veterinary Practitioners was established in 1978 to recognize excellence in clinical practice through the certification of species-oriented specialists. Approximately 745 veterinarians, world-wide, are certified in one of eight practice categories: Canine and Feline, Food Animal, Equine, Dairy, Swine Health Management, Feline, Avian, and Beef Cattle. For more information on ABVP visit [www.abvp.com](http://www.abvp.com).



*Dr. Gregory Burkett  
Board Certified Avian  
Veterinarian*

For appointments with Dr. Burkett for veterinary services, contact:  
Four Paws Animal Clinic  
919-942-1788

## Cleaning Your Bird's Cage-The Easy Way!

-by Gena Everhart

Want to make the task of cleaning your parrot's cage a little easier? Consistent daily attention to the bird's environment is key to making cleaning tasks less time consuming. Here are some tips to help you get a handle on keeping things clean.

- Clean problem areas such as droppings at the bottom of the cage and stuck on fruits and veggies every day. An easy way to do this is to use a good anti-bacterial cleanser. Apply with a damp sponge or spray bottle directly to soiled areas about 15 minutes before you plan to wipe with a sponge or cloth. This dissolves hardened droppings and stuck on food for easy removal. It really makes a difference!
- Some people like to place several layers of newspaper in the bottom of the cage and remove one layer at a time. If this works for you great! If not, simply replace paper daily.
- Put your parrot on their playspace and give the cage a good overall spray and clean with anti-bacterial cleanser once weekly. Use old clean toothbrushes to get in between tight areas. Wipe surfaces dry before returning your bird to the cage.
- For small cages, place the cage with paper

removed, in shower with hot water running for about 15 minutes prior to scrubbing (minus the bird, of course!). This will also soften and wash away much dried on material reducing the scrubbing time needed.

- Use your dishwasher to clean dishes, water bottles and toys as much as possible. Some wood toys should not be placed in the dishwasher because of colors that will bleed. Give those toys a quick scrub in the sink with some anti-bacterial, bird-safe, cleanser.
- If you don't already own a hand-held vacuum, purchase one and install it near the bird's cage. Use it to quickly run over the floor around the cage for pellets and debris each day.

If you consistently devote about 10-15 minutes per day following the suggestions offered here, you will find that the once weekly cleaning is not such a chore. Living with a parrot can be a bit messy but keeping on top of things can reduce this significantly.

**"Consistent daily attention to the bird's environment is key to making cleaning tasks less time consuming."**



*A clean environment reduces the health risks associated with picking up bacteria from a dirty cage. It looks nice too!*

Produced in cooperation with:  
The Birdie Boutique

The Birdie Boutique  
3039 University Drive  
Durham, NC 27707  
Phone: 919-490-3001  
Fax: 919-403-0218  
Email: [info@birdieboutique.com](mailto:info@birdieboutique.com)

VISIT US ON THE WEB  
[WWW.BIRDIEBOUTIQUE.COM](http://WWW.BIRDIEBOUTIQUE.COM)



photo by Jason Everhart 2003

Just hangin' out until the next newsletter

We are interested in your bird related stories for the next newsletter!

Of particular interest—success stories and pictures for Birdie Boutique babies for the website and newsletter.

Won't you share your stories of how you and your parrot found each other and life with your parrot?

If you'd like to share your personal interest parrot-related stories with others through this newsletter, please submit them to Gena Everhart via email at:  
[everhartfam@mebtel.net](mailto:everhartfam@mebtel.net)  
or bring them to The Birdie Boutique

- For First Time Parrot Owners—How to overcome the fear of the beak.
- Traveling With Your Parrot—A Bird Owner's Guide for Outings and Vacations
- Spending Time in the Great Outdoors for Your Bird-Safety First!
- Water Bottles are not Just for Hamsters

## February/March Specials



Bring this coupon in during the month of March and receive a 10% discount on any bird food product. A great time to stock up on Roudy-bush Pellets!



Avian Veterinary Special—Your bird should have an annual exam and polyoma virus vaccination. Bring this coupon into Four Paws Animal Clinic at your next visit and receive one grooming service free of charge. (wing clip **or** beak trim **or** claw trim) For appts at Four Paws Animal Clinic—call 919-942-1788 Expires 7/31/03