

## **BIRDS WILL BE BIRDS**

As one who fancies birds, you know that each bird is different. A parrot is as different from a robin as a horse is from a cat. In general terms, your pampered house cat is more closely related to a lion than a conure is to a cockatoo. When we name birds we name them by species not by breeds, and this is much different than comparing a Great Dane to a Chihuahua. We remind our pet owners that their canine and feline companions are NOT “little people in fur suits” and birds are definitely not little dogs and cats in “feather suits.” We know more about the behavior, individual health problems and nutritional needs of birds today than we did 50 years ago. However, there is still much more to learn.

Our parrot companions are still “wild” creatures. Unlike dogs, cats and horses, birds have not been domesticated for ages and ages. Birds respond to stimuli as they would in the wild. It takes gentle training and looking at behavior challenges from the bird’s perspective to have them adapt to our “civilized” life style. They are extremely intelligent creatures and get bored easily when challenges are not available for them. Like most of us, they prefer to be praised and reinforced for their good behavior rather than being punished for their “bad” actions. In most instances, what we consider “bad” behavior is actually just “normal” bird behavior.

Q. “Why is my bird so messy?”

A. Birds are one of Mother Nature’s “farmers.” One of their jobs is to distribute seeds so that vegetation will continue to flourish. Dropping seeds from their beaks is one way of accomplishing this. Your bird is not being necessarily wasteful or messy; he’s just sowing his crops.

Q. “Why does my bird continue to destroy the woodwork in my house?”

A. Depending on the species, birds chew wood for enjoyment, to build a nest, to find insects and probably many other reasons. If you have a “wood chewer,” provide him with wood that is appropriate for him to chew and move his cage or play stand far enough away from your woodwork so as not to “tempt” him to chew it.

Q. “Why is my bird so noisy?”

A. Babies cry, dogs bark, cows moo, and birds squawk. This is to say that it is a normal bird behavior. Birds are flock creatures and they want to know where their flock is especially at dawn and dusk. With us being their “flock” now, they will make their “contact call” at these times and when they hear us but cannot see us. They often respond to environmental sounds that either are pleasant or unpleasant. This does not address the bird that screams in excess.

At CARE-PETS we have access to experts in the fields of avian medicine, surgery and behavior. Our doctors are members of the Association of Avian Veterinarians and are able to keep abreast of the most current avian information. Your bird is a special to us as he or she is to you.