

How to Nurse your Bird at Home

STAY CALM and DON'T PANIC

Most pet birds are prey animals and often pick up on stress quite easily. Staying as calm as you can is the best way to make sure your bird doesn't pick up on your stress.

Medicating

- Make sure to give any medications that you have been prescribed for your bird as per the instructions told to you by the vet.
- Never self-medicate your bird without first speaking to a vet. Each medication is different and acts on the body in different ways. Some medications should not be given in certain situations and can make things worse.

Feeding

- Always provide your bird with all their normal food during times of illness.
- Soaking their pellets/seed in warm water to soften them often makes them easier to eat and more appealing.
- Sprouted seed and natural foliage can also be offered
- Make sure to discard uneaten fresh fruit and vegetables once spoiled
- Shredding or grating fresh food also helps to make it easier to eat.
- Hand rearing mixes can also be fed to your bird if they are unwell (even if they are an adult). This can be given either by a syringe directly into their mouth or via crop feeding. If you have not crop fed a bird before please do not attempt this as many problems can arise if this is done incorrectly, some of which are life-threatening.
- Make sure fresh water is available at all times.



Housing

- In general it is best to keep your bird in its normal house to reduce stress. In some cases, and particularly with severely unwell birds they may need to be moved into a carry cage or small bird cage for confinement, ease of access for you, to provide a secure space for the bird and also to allow the cage to be moved into a warm area.
- Make sure the cage/enclosure is cleaned regularly – at least once to twice daily.
- Make sure all food and water bowls are easily accessible. Sometimes spreading the food over the bottom of the cage or in shallow dishes/bowls is preferred by some birds.



- During times of illness it is sometimes wise to keep birds to one or two perches, and these should be placed on the lower levels on the cage – this helps to prevent them from falling and injuring themselves.
- If able – move the bird's house into a quite spot away from noises, other pets and people.
- If possible - have the bird housed indoors so as to minimize fluctuations in temperatures and other stressors.
- A towel half over the top of the cage/enclosure will help to keep warmth in and often make your bird feel safer.

Other Important Points

- Monitor their droppings – this includes the colour and consistency of their faeces, urates (white part of the faeces) and urine (the watery part)
- Monitor temperature and keep warm
 - Feeling the feet or just inside the beak (if safe to do so) can give an indication of body temperature. Birds will often shiver or look fluffed up when they are cold.
 - Using wheat heat packs, hot water bottles and towels/blankets is fine however be careful not to over-heat your bird. Wrapping heat sources with a towel will help to prevent burns.
- Check your bird's hydration regularly
 - Watch for drinking
 - Check their eyes – a dehydrated bird will often have sunken eye sockets, they may also be dry/tacky inside their mouths
 - Very dry, hard faeces can also indicate dehydration
 - Making the food offerings more dilute/watery or syringing water directly into the mouth can help with hydration.
 - As a general rule most birds need around 100ml of water per kg per 24 hour period
- Collars
 - Occasionally a specialised collar is required to prevent your bird from being able to reach a surgical site, or to stop them from self-traumatising themselves.
 - If your bird has had a collar placed, please leave it on them unless advised otherwise. Always speak to your avian vet first before taking a collar off your bird.
 - Your bird will be a bit grumpy for the first few days after the collar has been placed as they get used to it, but most birds adapt quickly and their behaviour should settle after a day or two.



Bird First Aid Kit

- Left-over medication – Always check with a vet before self-medicating your bird.
- Hand rearing mix
- Syringes in assorted sizes– 1 ml, 3 ml, 10 ml, 30 ml
- Towels and blankets
- Transport box, carry cage or small bird cage
- Heat packs
- Treats



Signs you have to go back to the vet

- No poop ☹️
- Not improving as expected by your vet
- Condition becoming worse
- Getting dehydrated
- Regurgitation
- Not eating by themselves in the expected time frame or requiring regular crop feeding
- Becoming more lethargic or fluffed up.
- Sitting at the bottom on the cage/enclosure
- Falling off perches
- Continued signs of pain—hunching, vocalising, stretching

For Afterhours Overnight Emergencies – Between 6pm – 8am

- Murdoch Pet Emergency Centre – Murdoch - 1300 652 494
- Vet24 – Balcatta – 9345 4644

Your bird will be referred back to your regular avian vet the following morning for continued treatment. Emergency clinics are there to provide initial first aid for your bird during the night however are not experts in avian medicine and surgery.

