



Paws, Claws and More

Mount Hutton Pet Hospital Newsletter

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Mount Hutton
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Some of bird clients have been crying fowl over the lack of bird articles in the past. We hope this issue makes amends! We aren't entirely bird brained though – we have managed to put some cat and dog in amongst the pigeons.

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New wire disease – buyer beware!

Zinc poisoning is all too common a problem in pet birds. It's difficult to treat and so easy to prevent! A bird can also have zinc and lead poisoning both at once; both syndromes are very similar.

What are the **signs** of heavy metal poisoning in birds?

- Vomiting
- Wing drooping
- Fits
- Green diarrhea
- Head pressing
- Blindness
- Lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Sudden death

Treatment is difficult and many birds die before they get to the vet

Prevention is easy!

- Avoid using cages made out of galvanized wire unless they are powder coated. *Scrub* cages with vinegar and “age” them outside for a few days before you put your bird in them.
- Remove or cover any excess solder –especially in corners
- Avoid soft PVC toys as they can contain both lead and cadmium.
- Never feed shop bought seeds used for planting as they are coated in lead arsenate

Birds eat seeds, don't they?

Actually, birds need more than just seed. Seeds are quite fatty and lack some vitamins, like vitamin B. Seeds also reduce the amount of Vitamin A available in the diet. The best source of vitamin B is in fresh leafy greens.



Many birds fed an all seed diet became obese and, strangely enough, malnourished, like kids brought up on MacDonalds – they lack those all important vitamins. This makes them more susceptible to disease.

Some birds refuse to change their diets as adults – but be persistent, as your bird will be healthier in the long run. Some ideas for change-over diets can be found on the internet and in good bird books. Feeding fruit and veg from an early age is of course the easiest way. Just avoid foods like avocado, or pips such as apple which are toxic.

Research what your bird eats in the wild and provide a diet as similar as possible. And don't forget the cuttlebone – it provides vitamins, minerals, beak manicures and entertainment!



Feeding Native Birds

Native birds can be frugivores, nectarivores, insectivores, even carnivores! Feeding bread soaked in milk and sugar may be tasty, but it lacks the essential nutrients their normal diet has. Some birds become dependant on it and don't learn where to get food from in the wild. They can also become calcium deficient and become ill. Planting native shrubs provides natural healthy foods and provides habitat too. If you feed native birds supplementary food, consider putting it in or near a natural feeding tree.

Seed Bells

Some commercial seed bells are stuck together with glue, which we don't think is the best thing to be feeding your bird!

So why not make your own. There are several recipes out there, using ingredients from stiff honey, to egg white, to hold the seeds together instead of glue. We like this recipe because the seeds don't get cooked, thus retaining more nutrients.

Ingredients

150ml Good quality seed mix
40 ml water
10ml gelatine

Heat water to 60°C and add gelatine slowly, mixing until smooth. Allow to cool. Add birdseed and mix gently, then press into moulds, ensuring a wire hanging loop is incorporated into the top of the bell. Refrigerate overnight, then dry thoroughly in a warm place to prevent mould growth.

Hang in the cage and enjoy!



Lorikeets are nectar eaters

– and love red flowers

Breed Bio ~ Budgerigar



Wild budgies live in large flocks in central Australia where the local aborigines gave them their name. They are all green and yellow as any other colour could easily be picked out by predators. In the 1800's sailors carried budgies around the world as their pets and spread the budgie craze. So many budgies were sent overseas for pet lovers, that the government had to halt the pet trade as early as 1884, to prevent the wild population from extinction. Today budgies come in the original green and yellow, as well as white, blue, yellow, violet and cinnamon, among others. Budgies readily learn to sing whistle and repeat words and short phrases. They are a gregarious bird and need company
Life span: 5-8 years



Gut blockages

or

Who ate the corn cob?

Hi, I'm Regi the Staffy!

I found a lovely buttery corn cob

and ate it. Yum! Unfortunately, corn cobs are not digestable, and it blocked my insides. At first it was just uncomfortable, but then my meals started building up in front of the blockage and I felt really terrible. I even went off my food! My owner noticed me moping around and vomiting, and took me to see Uncle Ray. He could feel the corn cob inside my tum, and I had to have surgery to get it out. So learn from my mistake, and know that other no-no's include:

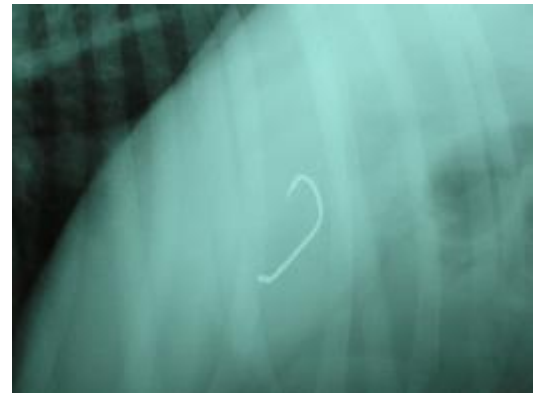
- any bone that is too small
- cooked bones
- smooth nuts like palm nuts



• marbles

• fish hooks

• tampons • rocks- etc...



Does your pet drink too much?

All animals tend to drink more as they get older, but how much is too much?

The normal rate is 100ml/kg/day; so:

- a 5kg cat should drink half a litre a day, and
- a 20kg dog should drink 2 litres a day.

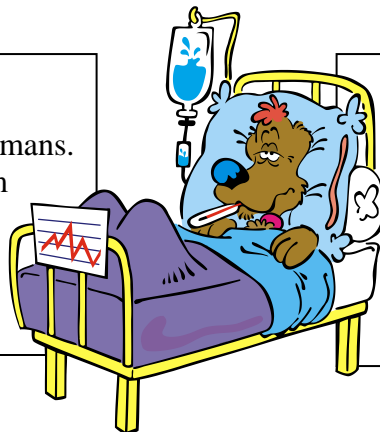


This vary depending on the amount of water in their food, the weather, and the age of the animal. Too much drinking can be a sign of diseases such as diabetes kidney disease and hormone imbalances.

How do you know if your pet is overdrinking? First of all, you need to be able to control the sources of water: close toilet lids, empty pot plant trays, etc. Then pour a measured amount into the water bowl, and put the water somewhere where it won't evaporate too much. At the end of a 24 hour period, measure what's left. Do this for several days and then average the figures.

Food allergies

Pets get food allergies just like humans. In animals, it can cause signs from generalized itchinness, to diarrhea, to mouth ulcers. Talk to our nurses about special allergen free diets.



Human medicines are not for pets.

Cats especially are sensitive to drugs like paracetamol, which can kill them. Dettol may be great for kids but its too harsh for pet skin and causes irritation. Please call us if you are unsure if your pet has taken the wrong medication.

Mammalian Oasis

What *not* to feed your pet



Go Native



You may have noticed a lot of dead Tawny Frogmouths on the roads at the moment. We have also seen many brought into the clinic in a very weak state, sometimes collapsed and crying out.

Every year in late winter and early spring Tawnies are found in this state, and after some research by Native animal groups and Pathology labs, the suspected culprit is organochlorine toxicity.

It is thought that the Tawnies become slowly poisoned by eating insects that have taken up the toxin from insecticides, such as those used against cockroaches. The toxin builds up in the birds' fat, and when there is less food around, such as in late winter, the birds break down their stored fat and release large amounts of toxin all at once.

Organochlorines are being phased out, but because they last for years and years, and accumulate in the food chain, this is a problem that we are likely to see for quite a while yet.

A similar disease, seen at a different time of year, is caused by an intestinal worm, introduced to Australia through cats. The Tawnies become infected by eating infected prey items such as slugs. The worm physically damages the Tawny's brain as it moves through the body trying to complete its life cycle.

AVA Pet PEP Proactive at Local Schools

Dr Sophie and Nurse Tenealle have been visiting schools over winter, giving talks to school kids as part of the Australian Veterinary Association PetPEP (Pets and People Education Program).

They have brought their pet Bearded dragon and Retriever in tow, much to the delight of the kids, if not all the teachers! The kids also heard talks from Council Rangers, and learnt about wildlife too. Children at Marks Point, Belmont North, and Valentine Primary Schools have learnt about what to think about when getting a pet, how to keep their pet and themselves healthy and happy, and how to avoid dog bites. If you would like your school to be involved in AVA PetPEP, please give us a call at the clinic, or contact the AVA.



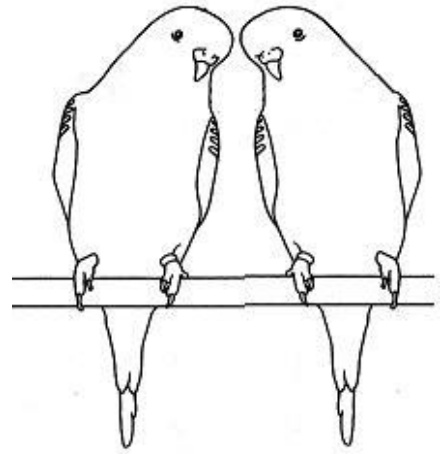
Kid's Korner –Fantastic Bird Facts

Parrots like **cockatoos** and **macaws** are some of the most intelligent birds and can live over 70 years in captivity



The

Budgies are the most numerous pet in Australia
In the wild they live in flocks and eat mainly spinifex grass



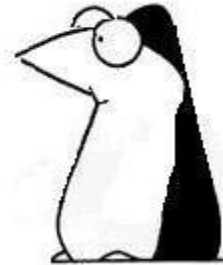
Aboriginal word budgerigar means “good food”

Our closest neighbour, Papua New Guinea has some of the world’s most famous birds: including the **birds of paradise** with their beautiful feathers and dances, and the **hooded pitohui**, the world’s only poisonous bird



they look the same but can fly

Penguins live in the Antarctic
The most northerly ones are found on the equator in the Galapagos islands
In the Arctic there are similar birds called **murre**s or guillemots



Magpies and butcher birds swoop to defend their territories at nesting time

Albatrosses soar over southern seas and have wingspans of 3.63m, but are beaten by the marabou stork, at 4m long!

The bird with the largest tongue is the **flamingo**



Too many **seagulls** prevent other seabirds from multiplying

Chickens can get the flu
Just like me or you



Emperor penguins dive the deepest but king penguins have the longest toenails.

Peregrine falcons are the fastest fliers –reaching around 180km/hr in a dive!

