

# A Guide For Performing A Basic Physical Examination On Captive Birds In Your Care

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## FOR SHELTER VETERINARIANS

Exam Date \_\_\_\_\_

Bird's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Hatch Date (if known) or approximate age \_\_\_\_\_

Species \_\_\_\_\_

Gender (if known) M F \* How determined: veterinary records breeder certificate DNA sexed

Body Weight in Grams \_\_\_\_\_

## MEDICAL HISTORY: *To be completed by shelter staff at intake*

Date of bird's last health examination \_\_\_\_\_

Wings: trimmed or full flighted \_\_\_\_\_

Diet \_\_\_\_\_

Past medical problems, past medications bird has taken \_\_\_\_\_

Current medical condition, current medications? \_\_\_\_\_

## BEHAVIORAL HISTORY:

List any behavior issues: e.g. screaming, plucking, biting \_\_\_\_\_

## PHYSICAL EXAMINATION FINDINGS:

Describe any abnormalities noted, or note if a system is not examined:

### General Appearance & Attitude:

Bright, alert, responsive (BAR) vs. quiet and depressed/lethargic with feathers fluffed, standing on bottom of care/carrier, eyes closed, sick appearance

Normal Abnormal

### Eyes:

Clear eyes, normal/blink/third eyelid and normal conjunctiva vs. discharge or ocular abnormalities (e.g. cataracts)

Normal Abnormal

### Nares & Cere:

Clear, patent nostrils vs. discharge or hyperplasia of skin, plugged nares

Normal Abnormal

### Beak/Mouth/Oral:

Proper occlusion and appearance vs. overgrowth or uneven with retained keratin. Check tongue and mucous membranes for moisture and color and evaluate choana and papillae.

Normal Abnormal

### Ears:

Open, clear vs. presence of discharge or erythema

Normal Abnormal

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**Pectoral Musculature, Sternum:**

Sternum should be straight and slightly elevated or even with the Pectoral muscles, palpate for evaluation of weight, atrophy of musculature

Normal      Abnormal

**Feathers, skin:**

Feathers and skin should be smooth and uniformly shaped and colored, evaluate for lesions and overpreening, plucking

Normal      Abnormal

**Abdomen Palpation:**

Palpate below keel. Normal is slightly concave vs. distended with fluid or masses/organomegaly.

Normal      Abnormal

**Auscultation/Heart/Lungs/Air Sacs:**

Normal heart rate and rhythm and clear respiratory sounds vs. heart murmur, abnormal respiratory sounds, wheezes, crackles, whistles

Normal      Abnormal

**Cloaca and Vent:**

Mucosa of cloaca should be moist and pink, no feces or discharge should be present on feathers around the vent

Normal      Abnormal

**Wings:**

Evaluate symmetry, range of motion, bony abnormalities, joints, Flight feathers vs. swellings, abnormal placement or flap, fractures (healed), color, shape and uniformity

Normal      Abnormal

**Feet and Legs:**

Color and texture of skin should be uniform, scales present. Look for abrasions, calluses, erosions, ulcerations, broken toenails, missing toes, swollen joints, weak grip. If there is a leg band present on a pet bird, record band number (may have birth year).

Normal      Abnormal

**Tail & Uropygial Gland:**

Normal tail feathers are clean, unbroken, unfrayed, and free from stress lines, evaluate uropygial gland for swelling, erythema, ulceration and rupture.

Normal      Abnormal

**Nervous System:**

Alert and aware, normal mentation, appropriate reactions to stimuli, normal grip and posture.

Normal      Abnormal

**Droppings:**

Normal appearance of formed feces (green/brown), white urates, and urine (clear, small amount) vs. diarrhea or polyuria, malodorous

Normal      Abnormal

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## OBSERVATIONS/NOTES:



# A Guide For Performing A Basic Physical Examination On Captive Birds In Your Care *cont.*

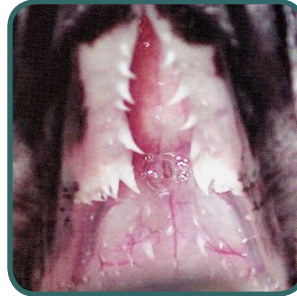
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## EYES/EARS



Normal eye and normal ear location

## ORAL CAVITY



Normal Choanal Papillae



Abnormal/Blunted Papillae

## CROOKED BEAK



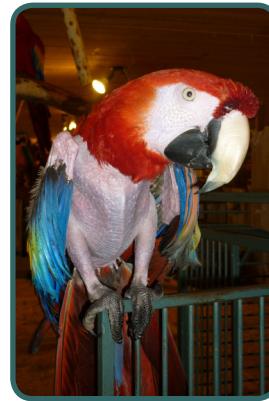
Abnormal beak shape from previous trauma or infection

## HEALTHY BEAK



Normal beak

## FEATHER DESTRUCTION BEHAVIORS

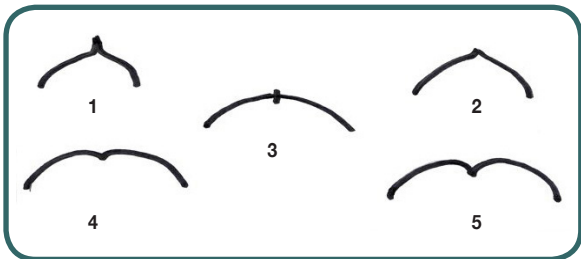


Feather-plucking Macaw



Self-mutilation Cockatoo

## BODY CONDITION

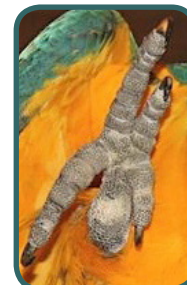


Score by pectoral muscle mass (right and left with keel bone in center) #1 (thinnest) to #5 (obesity) based on palpation during examination

## FEET & TOES



Abnormal toe with wear and hyperkeratosis



Normal toe bottom



Normal toe grip

Photos: Central Virginia Parrot Sanctuary, Foster Parrots, and MAARS.



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This information herein is intended solely for use by animal shelter and care facilities to accommodate the short-term care and housing needs of captive birds in a shelter setting; not recommended for long-term care. The above guidelines are specific to birds kept as "pets" and surrendered to shelters. For medical care relating to wild birds, consult with a licensed wildlife rehabilitation organization. These materials are made possible through a generous grant from the ASPCA.®