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

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

Nares & Cere: Clear, patent nostrils vs. discharge or hyperplasia of skin, plugged nares

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.

Ears: Open, clear vs. presence of discharge or erythema

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

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

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

Auscultation/Heart/Lungs/Air Sacs:
Normal heart rate and rhythm and clear respiratory sounds vs. heart mumur, abnormal respiratory sounds, wheezes, crackles, whistles

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

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

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).

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

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

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

**OBSERVATIONS/NOTES:**

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