

Intake Considerations for Incoming Birds

Whether a bird is owner surrendered, dropped off, found stray outdoors, or is brought to your shelter as a result of a seizure by humane law enforcements, it is important to capture as much information as possible about each bird and about the circumstances that brought them to your door. This documentation will be helpful in orienting the shelter veterinarian and staff about the bird's condition and immediate needs as well as in facilitating appropriate placement in the future.

OWNER SURRENDER - If an individual surrenders the parrot, here is some important information to obtain:

- Reason for surrender
- Age and gender of the bird (if known) and how determined (i.e. veterinary records, leg band number, breeder certificate, or DNA sexed)
- How long with current guardian, and how many previous homes.
- Parrot's name (parrots often know their names!)
- How was bird acquired: i.e. pet store or breeder, family or friend, found outside
- Leg Band Number (if present)
- Has the bird been seen by a veterinarian experienced with birds; name/phone # of vet
- Past medical conditions: diseases, injuries, or other health problems: if possible, obtain records of any prior veterinary care
- How was the bird housed: indoors or outdoors; cage or aviary
- Description of cage and/or environment bird was living in
- Has the bird lived with or had exposure to other birds
- Has the bird lived with or had exposure to other animals
- What kind of commercial food has the bird been eating
- Fresh fruits and vegetables the bird currently eats; other food preferences
- Does the bird interact with other birds or pets
- General disposition (friendly, timid, aggressive, fearful, nervous, or withdrawn)
- Is bird comfortable being handled
- Preference for men or women (parrots are typically gender specific)
- Behavioral issues: e.g. screaming, plucking, biting

DROPPED OFF OR FOUND STRAY - If the bird has been found outside or dropped off at your shelter with no information, you'll need to 'wing it.' Here are a few things to look to determine the bird's general condition and to access if they require immediate medical attention.

General Observations:

- Feather condition; shiny, clean bright feathers; or dull with signs of plucking, feather destruction; missing tail or wing feathers
- Identifying physical characteristics: missing toes or toenails, over-grown beak, "pinioned" wings (surgically altered to permanently impede flight) clipped or unclipped
- Willingness to eat and/or drink and how often
- Condition of the bird's droppings (i.e. watery, well formed, non-existent)
- Temperament; is the bird severely stressed, agitated, or aggressive; quiet, withdrawn, or fearful; friendly, active, and curious.

EMERGENCY CONDITIONS - If the bird is experiencing any of the following conditions, or any combination of these symptoms, they require immediate medical attention. Contact the shelter veterinarian ASAP.

- Respiratory distress; difficulty breathing, gasping, or excessive wheezing
- Bleeding, broken flood feathers, or skin lacerations, swelling or masses
- Limpness or dragging a wing or leg
- Inability to perch
- Lying prone on the bottom of the cage
- Seizures
- Discharge from nares (nasal area) or around eyes or mouth
- Lethargy, fluffed up feathers, sleepiness
- Dehydration
- Vomiting, or gagging to expel
- Bloody, bright green or extremely watery or formless feces*



Photo: Foster Parrots