

Handling and Restraint of Captive Parrots

Birds may need to be restrained for a variety of reasons while in the shelter: to be transported, for examination by the shelter veterinarian, to be administered prescribed medication, and/or for safety reasons. It is important that staff be trained to properly handle and restrain a bird to avoid injury to the bird and to the handler and to prevent escape.



WHAT TO EXPECT:

Birds are prey animals: fear and discomfort are likely to trigger a “fight or flight” response. They will often lunge or bite to escape.



OBSERVE FIRST:

- Access bird’s temperament: Frightened or withdrawn; mellow or approachable; agitated, or aggressive?
- Minimize stress: Allow the bird a few minutes to calm down



BE PREPARED:

- Have all equipment and supplies ready
- Use towels to catch and to hold large and medium-sized birds, smaller wash cloths for Cockatiels, Lovebirds and Parrotlets, and/or bare hands for Parakeets, Canaries, and Finches.
- One technician/handler should be on hand to restrain bird while the other performs exam or procedure



PROPERLY HOLDING THE BIRD:

- Capture the bird quickly, using one swift motion to pick up and wrap towel securely around bird
- Insure that the towel is wrapped around the bird so that both wings are held against the body and that bird’s head peaks out of towel
- Keeping a firm, but not a tight, grip, hold bird’s head firmly from the back with one hand, while the other hand holds the lower body; make sure that bird’s both feet are kept still. You will not choke a bird using proper restraint.
 - For small birds: place thumb and index finger on either side of head, grasping cheeks and ears (**Photo 1**)
 - Large birds: place thumb and index under lower jawbone on either side of head (**Photo 2 & Photo 3**)

IMPORTANT TIP:

Ideally, you want to gently roll the bird up in the towel like a baby, holding the bird by the head with one hand and ensuring that your other hand is immobilizing the wings against the body. If one or both wings get out and the bird fights the towel, injury such as a broken wing or neck can result.

YES



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3

NO



Photo 4



PREVENT ESCAPE & INJURY:

Perform handling, transport, and restraining procedures in a safe enclosed area of the shelter away from escape or danger paths. Close all doors and windows and draw curtains and blinds to avoid birds flying into glass; avoid areas with high or beamed ceilings, or with open spaces that lead to hiding places; ensure other animals are put away.



WHAT NOT TO DO:

- Unlike mammals, birds do not have diaphragms; air is moved in and out of their respiratory system through air sacs. Improperly restraining a bird by not allowing for body wall movement can result in suffocation. Care should be taken not to restrict or squeeze a bird’s chest and thus compromise their breathing. (**Photo 4**)
- Birds also have delicate skeletal frames; keep a firm, but not a tight, grip.
- Avoid putting any pressure on the bird’s eye area.
- Gloves should not be used except in an emergency when there is no alternative.



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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. These materials are made possible through a generous grant from the ASPCA.®

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