

Protecting Birds in the Shelter through Quarantine

One of the challenging aspects for most shelters caring for exotic birds is their ability to dedicate space and resources for the effective quarantine of incoming birds. Ideally, setting a protocol specific to your situation in consultation with your shelter veterinarian consult and a board certified avian veterinarian is advised.

Even under less than ideal conditions, it is important that a plan be in place to protect the health of the birds as well as the staff in your facility. Here are some basic guidelines.

What You Need to Know!

Any bird added to your present flock can endanger all the birds in your shelter! Quarantine is time consuming, inconvenient and more work. However, it also saves the lives of many birds and prevents many others from becoming ill.

How to Establish Basic Quarantine Protocols

- Any new birds coming in the shelter should be quarantined away from your present flock. Birds that appear ill or are confirmed to be ill should also be quarantined.
- Ideally, your shelter's quarantine area should be in a building separate from where other birds are housed.
- If a separate building is not possible, then a room with a door that can be shut and that is away from the rest of your flock will have to do. Quarantine area(s) should have a separate entrance and air supply (heating/cooling) than the rest of the facility, and a high-quality air filter.
- You do not want to walk through your quarantine area in order to get to other birds in the shelter. If possible, a hallway or room should separate your quarantine area from where other birds are housed.
- Birds in quarantine area(s) should not have contact with any other birds in the shelter.
- Cages, toys, dishes and perches should not be shared with the birds in the quarantine area and your other birds. They should be removed separately and washed with non-toxic soapy water, disinfected with Avitech or other safe disinfectant formulated for birds, air dried, and returned to the same cage.
- Anything from the quarantine room should not be near other birds in the shelter.
- Care for and clean your existing birds first before attending to the birds in the quarantine area(s).
- Use appropriate disinfectants formulated for birds. Dent-a-Gene is recommended for disinfecting the bird area.
- No new birds should be added to the quarantine room. If another bird is added, the quarantine times starts again for any already there.
- Keep the new bird in quarantine for at least 30 days and better yet up to 60 days.
- After your observations fail to show any signs of illness, and the bird has been seen an avian vet, you can put him/her in the same room as your other birds (provided your other birds are healthy).

Monitor the Condition of Birds in Quarantine

- Check the bird's droppings, feed dishes, and general appearance for signs of illness. The color and consistency of the droppings may suggest illness or may reflect what the bird has eaten. (*Refer to "Symptoms of Illness in Avians" document.*)
- Feed dishes that remain full mean that your bird is not eating well. Empty water dishes may mean your bird is bathing in his water dish or that he is drinking a large amount of water.
- A bird that is fluffed up and listless may indicate that your bird is trying to keep warm. If the room is kept at a comfortable temperature, this may be an indication that the bird is ill.

Remember: As prey animals, birds instinctually mask signs of illness or injury, and many avian illnesses may not be immediately apparent. Careful observation of changes in a bird's behavior, eating habits, and physical condition while in quarantine is recommended and should be reported to the shelter veterinarian.

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