

Transferring Birds from Carriers into Cages

WHAT TO EXPECT:

Birds are prey animals. Fear and stress often trigger a “fight or flight” reflex.

A frightened bird’s first instinct is to flee, usually to a high or open space, or an area where they can hide. Some birds may be too traumatized and refuse to exit carriers or cages at all, while others may act aggressively and bite.

First, consider the different risks of handling small birds vs. large birds. Small birds like budgies, lovebirds, finches, and cockatiels while not as likely to inflict a serious bite, fly much faster than larger ones and are more difficult to catch when airborne. Large birds like Cockatoos, Macaws, or Amazons are apt to react aggressively, and their powerful beaks are capable of causing injury to handlers.

Taking precautions will help to minimize the possibility of having a bird take flight into the shelter.

WHAT TO DO:

Move the carrier into as small and enclosed a space as possible. In the event a bird does escape, it will make it easier for you to retrieve them.

- Use an exam room or even a large closet
- Close all doors and windows and draw curtains and blinds.
- Block hard to reach areas and ensure all other animals are put away.
- Avoid using a room with a high ceiling as birds can fly up to light fixtures or exposed pipes.
- Allow severely stressed birds time to calm down before handling.

Have equipment ready: Wash cloths for handling small birds and larger fabric towels for medium/large birds, a net for birds that may escape, and a large sheet or blanket for blocking escape paths.

Set-up receiving cage: Perches, food and water dishes, and other furnishings should be in place before moving the bird out of the carrier and into the cage.

METHODS OF TRANSFER:

Hands Off Transfer: From Carrier to Cage (Not pictured)

- **If the carrier will fit inside the cage.** Simply place the carrier inside the cage with carrier door open and close cage door. Wait for bird to exit carrier and carefully remove carrier from cage. This is a good option for small birds. A net should be available in the event that a bird takes flight. Netting is very stressful for birds and can result in injury. Netting should be done as expeditiously as possible to minimize stress and the risk of injuring the bird.
- **If the carrier will NOT fit inside the cage.** Open cage and carrier doors and hold them against each other. Use a large towel or sheet to cover the carrier and cage and to block the sides and surrounding area that may allow for escape. Wait for bird to exit the carrier.

Hands On Transfer: From Carrier to Cage (Photos 1-4)

- **If you have to physically remove the bird from the carrier.** Place towel over entire carrier, and carefully remove carrier top and door. Keep carrier bottom covered. In one quick motion, grasp bird firmly, and place bird in cage. Remove towel and close cage door.

WHAT NOT TO DO:

- **Avoid putting any part of your body into the carrier.** Beaks may come in different sizes, but they are all capable of inflicting a painful bite. Frightened or stressed birds are very likely to bite.
- **Never open carrier door in an open area or before removing escape/danger paths.** Birds may fly into barriers, glass windows and mirrors, or look for an open door or area to fly to. You want to avoid having to chase down and retrieve a bird flying through the **shelter**, which can potentially injure the bird and/or shelter worker.

For Handling Large Birds

1.



Remove top.

2.



Keep bottom covered.

3.



Firmly grasp bird.

4.



Place bird in cage.