

WHAT KILLS PARROTS?

Captive parrots do not live out their natural lifespan. Most parrots can live 30 years or more, but modern living can shorten their life as accidents do happen. Here I have tried to give some information on hazards that can cause death.

CATS

Cats commonly have Pasteurella bacteria as part of their natural flora. While this bacteria is ubiquitous in cats and does them no harm, it is DEADLY to birds. Even if you cat just bats your bird or gets saliva on your bird, you could end up with a dead bird. Also, if your bird has a persistent problem with itching and other skin issues and you have a cat, this could be a cause and your vet should be asked to screen for this bacteria. If your bird is ever in a confrontation with a cat, take him to the vet immediately even if there are NO apparent wounds. The bird could still have been exposed to these bacteria. You should get your bird to a vet the same day if you think it has come in physical contact with cats saliva, faeces, or food. This bacterium means even friendly relationships between cats and birds are not safe.

COMMON HOUSEHOLD HAZARDS

Unclipped birds are at most risk when it comes to certain household hazards, such as open doors, windows, open toilets, pots and pans on the stove (burned/boiled/drowned/covered in oil), deep water in kitchen sinks or pails, ceiling fans, electrical wires, and anything the bird could chew and ingest that could cause damage to them either through poisoning or damage (glass objects). Anything that could kill a small child can kill a bird. A bird can get into the exact same kinds of trouble a 2-year-old human child can get into. Cats are hazardous to birds.

Also in the kitchen other potential dangers are the washing up liquid as this contains chemicals toxic to birds should they bite the container. Do not let them play on the cooker top as this could still be warm and it has also been reported that overheated chip oil can also be toxic.

THE MOST TOXIC ITEM TO ALL PARROTS IS TEFLON. ANY COOKING PAN OR BAKING TRAY OR ANYTHING TEFLON COATED IS INSTANT DEATH TO A PARROT IF THIS OVERHEATS, EVEN FROM 30 FEET AWAY.

This also includes your IRON as some have a TEFLON base plate.

Toxic Foods: Avocado, chocolate, coffee, salt, chocolate, coffee, and cocoa contain theobromine, which is toxic to birds. Do not give these to your birds and do not leave them out where your bird could get hold of them. Avocado is toxic, particularly to African species, but should not be given to any birds. A breeder related to us a story in which a sun conure baby they sold to a family was fed guacamole even though the new owners were warned about avocado. The sun conure was dead the next morning. No guacamole.

Parrots cannot excrete salt the way we can. High salt foods can be harmful to them. An occasional nibble from a chip might be okay, but don't let them get into the habit. Junk food is not good for your parrot. Avoid high fat, high sugar, high salt snacks. Once in a blue moon won't kill them, but beware of giving foods like this. Parrots can get into bad habits just like humans. Resist the temptation to give in to them if they "beg" for your chips.

PEANUTS. This is a big topic as many people feed their bird on a seed mix that contains peanuts. It is best to buy a mix without peanuts to avoid this happening. Peanuts in shells can contain the bacteria that causes aspergilosis.

Although it seems obvious, I will state it nonetheless. DO NOT GIVE ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES to your bird under any circumstances. It is cruel, not amusing, to get your bird drunk. Their liver cannot metabolize the alcohol. Also be aware of the fruit juice carton as the lining is poisonous.

SMOKING IS NOT ONLY DANGEROUS TO HUMANS, IT TOO IS DANGEROUS FOR YOUR BIRD.

DANGEROUS TOYS

The hanging toy called "Cotton Candy" can become a noose for your bird. If you must give your bird this toy, monitor it at all times and remove it from the cage when you are not present. The strings can get tangled around the bird's neck and choke it to death or it can get around a leg and cause amputation.

Lanyard clips can be problematic. These are the toy/swing connector clips that open with just a bit of pressure, then slide over the cage wire, then close up when you release pressure. Some birds get beaks or toenails caught in them. Plastic chains that open within each link or plastic chains that have too wide an opening can become nooses and strangle birds. They can also tear at the neck tissue if the bird gets caught in one with a hinged opening and the bird struggles to escape.

Metal chains can also cause a problem if a bird's toenail gets caught where a link meets itself. Keeping toenails properly trimmed so they are not too sharp at the end can decrease this risk. Also, tighten with a pair of pliers any gaps you find in chain links.

Rope perches can be problematic if the loose threads wrap around a bird's leg. Soft rope toys in general should not be long enough for a bird to get its neck entangled in it. Certain ropes are designed to fray if a bird gets tangled such as sisal rope and special cotton rope.

Cage Covers pose a similar problem if any loose strings get around a bird's leg. One woman reported that she used a towel to cover her birds' cage. One bird had gotten a string so tightly around his leg that he had gnawed at his own foot (and his mate helped him gnaw on it) to try to get free. He gnawed off two toes and was still stuck. When the owner came home she cut off the string, but the sudden release of pressure caused the severed blood vessels to gush blood. She did not have any blood coagulant on hand like a styptic pencil so she used corn flour to stem the flow (this is a good home remedy in emergencies to stop bleeding). The bird died.

PLUG-IN AIR FRESHENERS LINKED TO BIRD DEATHS

There have been some recent reports that birds have died due to unexplained causes in homes in which plug-in air fresheners had recently been added. While a direct causal link cannot be made, it is recommended that birds not be exposed to fumes of any kind. Birds should be removed from a room before you use any type of spray cleaner. It is probably best for those who keep birds in their home not to use any device that releases a scent in the room.

Cleaners, Aerosols, Candles, Other Household Items

The following items have been linked anecdotally to bird deaths. By anecdotally, I mean that individuals have reported sudden, unexplained bird deaths after use of or exposure to these items and in cases where necropsy was performed birds were found to have lung damage such as lesions and haemorrhaging. While it cannot be definitively said that these substances were the cause of death, most avian specialists would advise bird owners to avoid exposing their companion birds to any strong chemicals, particularly aerosolized chemicals, due to the delicate nature of their lungs. If you use any sprays or scented products it is advisable that you remove birds from the environment until the smell has completely subsided (at least 2-3 hours). Also, do not use scented cleaners/chemicals on items the bird might chew. We have already given warnings about Teflon, non-stick cookware, and plug-in air fresheners above and below this section. Remember, lung damage from a toxic substance can be instantaneous and is irreversible!

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Febreze: There have been reports of this spray being toxic to birds. They have done years of product research and have reports from many households that have used the spray with no ill effects on pets reported. It should be noted that Febreze is not an aerosol, it is a pump spray. Febreze reports that they are actively working with veterinarians and avian specialists to determine if there is cause for concern. Please remember to read the directions on any spray you use in your home and exercise common sense. Do not spray things directly on pets or their bedding or cages. Air out rooms before returning birds to them no matter WHAT you use to clean.

New Carpet: The glue and other smells that are very strong after the installation of new carpet can be hazardous to birds.

Scented candles or any candles with oils used to scent them: A woman put three different fragrances of Glade candles in various rooms. Birds were in each of these rooms. The birds died within a few minutes of lighting the candle.

Scented toilet paper and tissues: the scent on the paper can be poisonous if chewed.

Pine-scented items: It has become more and more well known that pine-scented cleaners and other pine-scented substances are toxic to birds.

Potpourri: Potpourri can look very enticing to a bird, but the perfumes used to give it scent would definitely be poisonous if ingested.

Glue Guns: with more people making their own greeting cards, the fumes from a hot glue gun can become toxic, so be aware, here is an example. A woman reports, "I found my baby quaker in respiratory distress after being exposed to the fumes from the smallest of hot-glue guns. The gun did get very hot and I could smell the fumes myself. It was only seconds after he entered the room that he began to sneeze and gasp. SECONDS! Fresh air in a back room was all it took to refresh him but certainly just a few more seconds of exposure would have been irreversible."

TOXIC PLANTS. Here is a short list common in households.

Amaryllis bulbs. Acorns. Avocado. Azalea. Buttercup. Calla lily. Clematis. Daffodil. Delphinium. Foxglove. Holly. Honeysuckle. Hyacinth. Hydranger. Ivy. Iris. Lobelia. All Nightshades. Mushrooms. Peach/apricot/nectarine/ plum stones. Pointsetta. Rhubarb leaves. Snowdrop. Sweet peas. Thistles. Any uncooked beans.

Hopefully I have given you some information to be aware of, but also consider the cage your bird has for its home. A powder coated cage is best, not a brass one. You need to consider the effect some materials can cause, such as lead or zinc poisoning. Metals on key rings, mirrors, curtain weights & welded mesh can all be a problem, as can be lead in pencils.

Please be careful with items around the home, in use or not.