

Reducing Nesting and Reproductive Behaviors in Your Bird

Today we discussed the importance of NOT letting your bird nest and lay eggs and/or reducing reproductive drive. To reduce her desire to nest and lay eggs, the following factors should be controlled:

-LIGHT:DARK CYCLE: It is very important that birds get the appropriate number of hours of sleep each night in COMPLETE DARKNESS. All birds should have at least 12 hours of COMPLETE darkness each night. If there is less than this number of hours, your bird will be tricked into thinking that it is spring, a time of natural reduction of darkness and this is the time that many species of birds will lay their eggs. Complete darkness can be achieved with dark covers over the cage that completely cover the cage. Remember that no night lights, lights in adjacent rooms or lights shining into the room from outside should be allowed to change this light cycle.

-ACCESS TO A "MATE": Female birds will have a strong drive to lay eggs if they have a mate. In many instances, a mate will be another bird however, some birds may inappropriately mate with a toy, a mirror or a human companion. Behaviors that indicate that your bird is "Mated" include regurgitation to the mate and masturbation or rubbing the vent area on or around the mate. If your bird has "mated" with a toy or mirror, this item should be removed immediately and not returned to the enclosure. If your bird perceives you or a family member as a mate, you should stop all petting performed below the level of the wings, stop feeding from the mouth, and limit contact to short frequent sessions that end prior to masturbation behaviors.

-NESTING MATERIAL: Birds that have access to a nesting site and nesting material will have a strong drive to lay eggs. Eliminate all toys and caging material that can be perceived as a nesting site including boxes large enough to climb into and stuffed animals. Eliminate all toys and caging material that can be perceived as nesting material such as fibers or any other material that your bird shreds and begins to build a nest with.

-PETTING: It is sometimes uncomfortable to think about, but if we pet our birds "below the shoulders" they may perceive this as sexual attention. For this reason, it is important to only pet our birds on the neck and head regions.

-MEDICATION: There is an implant that can be placed under your birds skin (typically done under sedation or short anesthesia). This implant can only be placed after your birds environment has been changed with the above changes. The implant can have a variable effect, lasting from as little as 2 months or as long as 6 months. This implant has no known adverse side effects