

# WHEN SHOULD I TAKE MY BIRD TO A VETERINARIAN?

## INTRODUCTION

Many species of birds have a long lifespan, and people who obtain a companion or aviary bird expect a long-term, rewarding relationship with their pet. Having an avian (bird) veterinarian on your team can play a vital role in helping to achieve this goal. The Association of Avian Veterinarians (AAV) recommends regular checkups for companion birds to ensure they live a full, healthy life.

## AN AVIAN VETERINARIAN CAN HELP YOU:

### Choose a New Pet Bird

Experienced avian veterinarians are a valuable source of information regarding the personality, needs, and longevity of the many different species of pet birds. They can also discuss with you what to look for when selecting a new bird. Starting off with a healthy and compatible pet makes everything so much easier!

### Make Sure Your New Bird Is Healthy

Whether you buy or adopt a new pet bird, make sure to take them to a veterinarian for a health check right away. Not only does this visit protect your financial investment, it also protects the health of the other birds, pets, and people in your home. Many bird diseases and health problems are not obvious, and avian veterinarians have been trained to recognize subtle signs of trouble. Using a combination of physical examination findings and diagnostic testing, your veterinarian will screen your new pet for medical issues. Ask your avian veterinarian about diagnostic testing for bacteria, viruses, and parasites, and about blood tests to monitor organ function and other physiological processes. A blood test can also be done to determine the sex of your bird if you own a species in which males and females look alike.

### Provide Your Bird with the Best Diet and Housing Possible

Your veterinarian can recommend an appropriate cage with proper perches, fun toys, foraging feeders, water bottles, and other cage accessories to ensure that your bird is comfortable and secure. Feeding your bird properly is one of the most important aspects of keeping it healthy, and an avian veterinarian is the most knowledgeable resource available about what diet will be best for your companion.

### Address Training Issues and Unwanted Behaviors

Your avian veterinarian can explain normal and abnormal behaviors for the species of bird you own. They can also help you with behavior modification to reduce unwanted biting, screaming, and egg production. The psychological wellbeing of both owner and bird are equally important to establish and maintain a good relationship.

### Set Up a Breeding Program

Birds destined to be in a breeding situation have different needs than birds that will be companion pets. Your avian veterinarian can determine the sex of your birds, and advise you on purchasing mates, quarantining new birds, proper diet and housing, egg laying cycles, incubation procedures, hand-feeding babies, nursery management, and more.

### Give Your Bird the Best Life Possible

Health problems in birds can be difficult to identify. An annual health check with an experienced avian veterinarian is essential for the prevention and early detection of illness. AAV recommends that you have your bird seen by an avian veterinarian a minimum of once per year. Annual visits allow your veterinarian to establish normal values that can be used as a baseline, and screen for problems that cannot be seen.

### Help Your Bird When It Is Ill

In the wild, a sick bird will attempt to maintain a normal appearance as long as possible. One result of this behavior in companion birds is that by the time signs of illness are obvious, the bird may have been ill for some time. For this reason, owners should bring their birds to their avian veterinarian promptly when signs of illness are noticed. For more information, please see the AAV handout entitled "Signs of Illness in Companion Birds."



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## Help You Learn What Every Bird Owner Should Know

- Basic daily bird care requirements
- Proper nutrition required for your species of bird
- Proper housing and environmental needs for your bird
- Environmental enrichment such as toys and foraging opportunities
- Techniques for accident prevention
- How to prevent the spread of disease from one bird to another
- How to provide emergency care to your bird
- How to identify signs of illness so that proper medical care can be sought
- How often your bird needs medical care

## Finding an Avian Veterinarian

There are several good ways to find an avian veterinarian near you. A comprehensive list of avian veterinarians can be found on the AAV website; visit [www.aav.org](http://www.aav.org), then click on "Find a Vet." Other bird owners as well as local bird stores and clubs can also be good sources of information.

## AAV: Setting a Standard in Avian Care Since 1980

Avian medicine is a distinct and very specialized field that requires extensive training, advanced skills, and facilities specifically designed and equipped to treat and hospitalize birds. The Association of Avian Veterinarians was established to provide veterinarians with this special education, and to keep them up to date with the latest information on bird health. The AAV holds an annual conference on avian medicine and publishes the peer-reviewed *Journal of Avian Medicine and Surgery*. AAV also makes annual contributions toward avian conservation and sponsors studies advancing the understanding of avian medicine.

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Association of Avian Veterinarians  
PO Box 9, Teaneck, NJ 07666

## For More Information

For more information on birds, ask your veterinarian for copies of the following AAV Client Education Brochures:

- Avian Chlamydiosis and Psittacosis
- Veterinary Care for Your Pet Bird\*
- Basic Care for Companion Birds\*
- Behavior: Normal and Abnormal
- Caring for Backyard Chickens
- Digital Scales
- Feather Loss
- Feeding Birds
- Injury Prevention and Emergency Care
- Managing Chronic Egg-laying in Your Pet Bird
- Signs of Illness in Companion Birds\*
- Ultraviolet Lighting for Companion Birds
- When Should I Take My Bird to a Veterinarian?\*
- Zoonotic Diseases in Backyard Poultry\*

*\*Available in multiple languages. All others are available in English only at this time.*

## Online Resources

Follow AAV on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/aavonline](https://www.facebook.com/aavonline)) for great tips and the latest news for pet bird owners. You can also find us on Twitter (@[aavonline](https://twitter.com/aavonline)) and YouTube!

Our website, [www.aav.org](http://www.aav.org), offers a Find-a-Vet tool to help pet bird owners locate avian veterinarians around the world. We also offer a variety of resources such as basic bird care instructions and more. Visit the website today!



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