

GROOMING AND PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

Many clients like to have their pet bird groomed and examined several times a year. When I do these procedures I prefer to sedate the bird with isoflurane gas anesthesia. This greatly reduces stress to the bird as well as to the veterinarian and his assistant. This technique is very safe and universally accepted by almost all of my clients once they have seen it done. With the bird relaxed a much more thorough exam is possible and grooming procedures are more easily performed. A description of how I exam and groom a bird is outlined below.

- 1. I use a clean towel to catch and hold the bird. I do not use gloves of any kind. Nets may be used on free-flying aviary birds.**
- 2. Assuming isoflurane has been administered and the bird is now sedated, I position the bird on its back and place a roll of masking tape under the face mask that is maintained over the bird's head. This lifts the bird's head higher than the body which helps prevent any passive regurgitation of crop contents into the oral cavity. The anesthetic cone and the bird's body are kept under the exhaust hood at all times.**
- 3. I use 70% alcohol to wet the feathers over the chest and abdomen. This allows me to spread the feathers so I can directly visualize the skin over the breast, the breast muscle itself, the abdominal region, and the vent. I am able to evaluate the bird's general condition and ascertain a weight description. The cloaca (vent) is inspected with a Q-tip to look for papillomas and any other abnormalities.**
- 4. I manipulate each wing to check for arthritis, old fractures, feather cysts, wing tumors, etc. If the client wants the bird's wings clipped I do it at this time. I will clip the wings however the client wishes. However if their desire is that the bird doesn't fly, then my standard technique is to trim**

the first 7 or 8 primary flight feathers on each wing. They are trimmed back far enough so that the cut edges lie beneath the tip of the primary covert feathers. This provides a cosmetic trim and effectively renders the bird flightless.

- 5. Next I turn the bird over and evaluate the tail feathers and preen gland, which is located on the bird's dorsal aspect of the tail base. I will palpate the back for any spinal deformities. Then I roll the bird onto its back again. I manipulate each leg and foot, again checking for any type of abnormality.**

- 6. If the owner wants the nails trimmed, I do this next. Nails are trimmed with either human or canine toenail clippers. I will usually dremel the cut edges to smooth out any jagged or sharp points. If any bleeding occurs, I will pack the nails with a coagulant powder (Kwik Stop).**

- 7. At this point, isoflurane anesthesia is discontinued. The bird is then weighed on a digital scale and the weight recorded in grams.**

- 8. Next I examine the bird's head. I check the nares first for any accumulated debris. If the nares are occluded, I clean them with a dental curette. I examine the eyes, ears, and oral cavity and palpate the neck and crop.**

- 9. Lastly, I trim the bird's beak if needed. First I make sure the bird is starting to rouse. Then the assistant holds the bird wrapped in a towel but exerting no pressure. I control the head and neck with one hand while the other hand holds a variable speed dremel tool. I use a coarse conical grinding stone. If the surface of the beak is scaly and irregular, I will smooth it out. This part of the trim is purely cosmetic. Next I shorten the edges on the sides and then I trim the tip of both the upper and lower beak if they are too long. Excess beak dust is removed with aerosolized, canned air. A few drops of mineral oil are placed on the beak and rubbed in with a gauze sponge to give it a finishing shine.**

10. Usually at this point the bird is almost fully awake. An assistant or the owner may hold the bird in a towel for a few minutes or it is placed on the floor to fully recover. Then the bird is placed in its carrier or cage and monitored for the next 10-15 minutes before the owner is allowed to leave.