

Birds
ALTERNATIVE VETERINARY MEDICINE CENTRE

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BIRDS

“So live that you wouldn’t be ashamed to sell the family parrot to the village gossip!”

Attributed to William Rogers - 1875-1935

One day I had a large and smart cage brought in to see me, containing one African Grey parrot. He was enigmatically called Polly. The bearer of this fine creature was a very smart young lady, in business wear. The bird was a reputed to be a little difficult about having his claws clipped, so I was the lucky one to get the job!

I know parrots. They are lovely birds but can have a nasty propensity to crush a finger as if it were a brazil nut; no problems. Being the careful chap that I am, and having been forewarned that Polly might not see the funny side of my attentions, I put a towel over my hand and proceeded to open the cage door and reach inside. Said young lady watched, in anticipation of a battle royal.

I smartly hedged the bird into one corner of the cage but he skillfully eluded me. He deftly evaded my grasp twice more, until I had him nicely but gently cornered. At this point he decided to vocalise: “B**g*r off!”

I could hardly contain myself and, resisting laughing out loud for all I was worth, I glanced at the smart young thing who had brought him in. All composure had slipped away. A touching rosy hue had come to the cheeks. I helpfully asked: “*What did he say*”, only to be greeted by further deep blushing and total confusion, spluttering “*He doesn’t usually say that!*”

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Needless to say, I won that round with Polly and put him back in his cage. I checked around for details of management, for welfare points, when I was told he spent most of his time out of the cage, *en famille*. He flew freely round the house, for most of the day.

While not representing much, against the normal environment of rainforest, this environment gave the bird a better life than most cage birds in the UK. We even call parrots, budgerigars, canaries and others 'cage-birds', as if that were their purpose in life. Our mastery over and captivity of these lovely and sensitive creatures must give us a responsibility to ensure that they have as much room as possible, a safe environment, correct food and sympathetic humidity and temperature control. Galvanised cages must be avoided, since they can cause zinc poisoning. Cages must be regularly cleaned and free of dangerous projections. There should preferably be room to fly or, if not, certainly the bird should be given some supervised freedom during the day, to exercise wings and lungs. Water and food receptacles should not be plastic and should be cleaned daily. Food must be of the correct type for the species. Perches should vary in diameter, in order to exercise the feet and to allow choice of perching grip. Living areas must have sufficient interest to allay boredom and stereotypic behaviour. Birds should not be caged where they are trapped in strong sunlight from a window, nor in draughts. They should not be confined where they can be harassed by a cat. When obtaining a bird, he or she should not be wild-caught. The awful trade in misery, that is the tropical wild bird trade, results in an unbelievably massive percentage of illness and death, *en route* to your home.

If the environment and [diet](#) you provide fail to maintain beak or claw length and health, then those will need regular expert attention. If allowed to grow too long, distortion will occur.

By and large, birds survive incredibly well in good home environments, but illnesses can occur. [Homeopathy](#) (avian homeopathy) is a safe and gentle form of medicine for birds, quite free from the serious dangers that modern drug medicine can present for their treatment. Birds respond well to all the usual injury and first-aid remedies. *Caulophyllum* can treat egg-binding, *Silica* or *Hepar sulph.* can treat bumblefoot, *Pulsatilla* or *Sulphur* may treat respiratory disease, such as sinusitis. Crusting or sores around the cere or beak (frounce) could respond to *Condurango*. Feather-pecking, Beak and Feather Disease, Psittacosis (a danger to humans - [zoonosis](#)) and Mange can all respond well, to skilled professional homeopathic treatment, provided by a trained veterinary surgeon. See also: [Avian Influenza](#)

Raptors respond equally well to sensitive natural medicine input. Apart from first-aid treatment of injuries etc., homeopathy provides the capability of

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treating birds of prey quite without the risk of side effects, adverse reactions or idiosyncratic reactions.

And then there's poultry

Christopher Day (veterinary homeopath) – June 2001

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