

# When Should I Take My Bird to a Veterinarian?

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

## How Your Veterinarian Can Help

Your avian veterinarian can advise you as to the characteristics of the many pet bird species to help you decide which would be most suitable for you. An avian veterinarian can also teach you to identify obvious signs of illness, which will help you to choose a healthy bird. Bird health is difficult to evaluate, and the knowledge of how to recognize a healthy bird is a valuable tool. A quality bird source, whether a pet store or a breeder, will welcome an informed shopper.

## Post-purchase Exam: Start with a Healthy Bird

When buying a cat or dog, it is customary to take the new pet to a veterinarian for a health check. This same health check is important for a newly purchased bird, not only to protect your financial investment, but also to protect the health of other birds, pets, and even people in the home.

Many diseases and other health problems are not obvious by just looking at the bird. An avian veterinarian is trained to recognize subtle signs that indicate health problems and can use

testing to screen for problems not visible on physical examination. Ask your avian veterinarian about screening tests for bacteria, viruses, and parasites, and about blood tests to monitor organ function and other physiological processes. A blood test should also be done to determine the sex of your bird since males and females can have different health issues. Additionally, discuss vaccinating your bird against viral diseases.

## Learn How to Best House and Feed Your Bird

Your veterinarian can recommend an appropriate cage with proper perches, fun toys, foraging feeders, water bottle, and other cage accessories to ensure that your bird is comfortable and secure. Your avian veterinarian can also make recommendations for feeding your bird properly, and what treats are healthy and safe to give to your bird.

## Have a Well-trained, Responsive Bird

Your avian veterinarian can explain normal and abnormal behaviors and many avian veterinarians can assist with behavior modifications so you may truly enjoy the companionship of your pet bird. Birds need to learn that biting, screaming and other unwanted behaviors are unacceptable in the home environment, and at the same time, owners must have realistic expectations of a pet bird. The psychological well-being of the owner and the bird are equally important to establish and maintain a good relationship.

## Annual Health Checkup

AAV recommends that you have your bird seen by an avian veterinarian a minimum of once per year. Annual visits allow your veterinarian to 1) establish normal values that can be used as a baseline, and 2) to screen for problems that cannot be seen. Disease and other health problems in birds can be difficult to identify, consequently, an annual health check is essential in the prevention and early detection of illness.

### Every Bird Owner Should Know:

- Basic daily bird care requirements
- Proper nutrition required for a healthy bird
- Housing and environmental needs for their bird
- The importance of environmental enrichment such as toys and foraging opportunities
- Their avian veterinarian's phone number and when to schedule a checkup
- Techniques for accident prevention
- How to prevent the spread of disease from one bird to another
- How to provide emergency care to their bird



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## AAV: Setting the Standard in Avian Care

Avian medicine is a distinct, and very specialized field that requires extensive training, advanced skills, and facilities designed and equipped to treat and hospitalize birds. AAV was established to provide veterinarians with this special education and to update them with the latest information to help maintain bird health. The AAV provides veterinarians with an annual conference and a wide range of scientific literature to assist them with continuing education. As part of the advancement in avian medicine, AAV makes annual contributions to conservation and avian medical research to further our knowledge of avian medicine and improve the care that veterinarians can provide.

## Finding an Avian Veterinarian

There are several good resources for finding an avian veterinarian near you. Among these are referrals from other bird owners and local bird clubs. Local bird clubs are an excellent source for knowledgeable and informed bird owners.

A comprehensive list of avian veterinarians can be found on the AAV website – visit [www.AAV.org](http://www.AAV.org), and click on “Find a Vet.”

## For More Information

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

- Basic Care for Birds
- Behavior: Normal and Abnormal
- Avian Chlamydiosis and Psittacosis
- Feather Loss: Cause and Treatment
- Feeding Birds
- Health Exam for Birds
- Injury Prevention and Emergency Care
- Signs of Illness in Birds
- When Should I Take My Bird to a Veterinarian?

## Breeder and Aviary Bird Care

Birds destined to be in a breeding situation require different handling than birds that will be companion pets. Your avian veterinarian can make recommendations about determining the sex and purchasing mates for breeder birds, about quarantining new birds, proper diet and housing for breeders, egg laying cycles, incubation procedures, hand-feeding babies, nursery management, and other important bird breeding care information.

## Online Resources

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

AAV offers bird clubs a monthly news bulletin for use in their newsletters. Clubs may contact the Publications Office ([pubs@aav.org](mailto:pubs@aav.org)) for information.

