

WHY IS MY ANIMAL SO ITCHY ALL OF THE TIME?

Lots of things make animals itch. The number one culprit is the flea! If your pet isn't current on flea preventive or is particularly sensitive to fleas, this can cause severe itching and discomfort and sometimes you won't even see the little things!! Often the issue goes beyond fleas and involves food or environmental allergies. To determine the real cause of the problem it is recommended you speak to your vet. They can perform small skin tests to figure out the cause and start a plan of action.

MY CAT SEES THE CARRIER AND RUNS AND HIDES! WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE THE ANXIETY SURROUNDING HIS CARRIER?

This is a common trend with cats, they see the carrier and they bolt. Then you spend the better part of an hour looking for puss while watching the clock knowing the vet appointment is just about passed. A way to avoid this is rather simple, incorporate your cat's carrier into his/her home environment. Instead of bringing out their carrier at the time it is needed, leave the door off the carrier and place it in area where the cat is comfortable. That is, Cat climber, next to food bowls or their bed. This helps teach the cat the carrier is a OK. That it is a safe place to be. The next time you need a trip to the vet it's guaranteed the carrier issue is no longer.

I NEED TO UPDATE MY ANIMALS MICROCHIP DETAILS. HOW DO I DO THIS?

If you move house or change your telephone contact it is very important to update your pet's microchip details as soon as possible. Your local vet hospital can provide you with the appropriate paperwork to be filled out and posted to your local council. Alternatively if you just want to check the details are all correct, call the hospital with your pet's microchip number and the friendly staff can look up the details on the companion animal registry. This is a search engine only, details cannot be updated.

DO I NEED AN APPOINTMENT GET PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION?

If it is a new occurrence then yes, we will need to examine your pet. The most important concern is your pet's welfare therefore an examination is necessary in determining the best path and treatment for your pet. Most drugs have legal restrictions on their supply and a consultation is required by law before they can be dispensed. If your pet has a reoccurring problem and is seen regularly, no longer than a 6 month period between consultations, then under most circumstances we are able to rescript the appropriate medications. To save yourself time and to prevent misunderstandings please phone with your request before coming to the clinic.

WHY DOES MY PET NEED A BLOOD TEST BEFORE SURGERY?

At Vetmed we work at the highest standard of care and we strongly believe performing a preanaesthetic blood test for animals who are undergoing a general Anaesthetic is meeting that standard. All animals receive a full physical exam during their surgical stay, but a preanaesthetic blood test gives us a much more detailed look into your animal's health by showing us any underlying disease processes that may be present but not obvious. We are predominantly looking at kidney and liver function as these are the two main organs that process the anaesthetic drugs. Any hidden problems can therefore be detected before surgery. Blood testing also gives us a baseline reading so if there are any future problems with your pet, we have information with which to compare current results.

I FOUND A STRAY ANIMAL, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

If you have come across a stray animal and have tried to find it's owner unsuccessfully, the best thing to do is take this animal to the closest veterinary hospital. That way his microchip can be scanned for his family's contact details and they can be reunited. In the unfortunate event the animal is not microchipped or the contact details are not up to date the animal will be transported to the pound where pet owners more commonly know to search for their missing animals.

MY DOG HAS BAD DOGGY BREATH. WHAT CAN I DO?

A lot of times plaque is the culprit in causing your pets smelly breath. Brushing your dogs teeth regularly, add dental diet food and making sure they have plenty of bones will help to get rid of that yucky doggie breath. Plus, an annual visit to the vet for a proper dental teeth clean will help

to ensure your dog has not only great smelling breath, but also healthy teeth and gums! Yep, pets should have a regular visit to the pet dentist too and the vet!

HOW CAN I GET MY DOG TO TAKE ITS TABLET?

Dogs are not silly, they can smell tablets and won't just eat them out of your hand like it is a treat. Try breaking the tablets up and mixing in with their dog food. You can also try placing the broken pieces inside a piece of soft cheese, sausage even pate works. Some dogs will try and hide the pill in their mouth then spit them out, so watch them for a minute or so to make sure the pill has been swallowed. If your dog will not eat the broken tablets in any type of food, place the tablet on the very back of the dogs mouth and hold the dogs mouth shut until they swallow the tablet.

HOW DO I GIVE MY DOG MEDICINE THAT IS LIQUID?

If you are on your own, it is best to try using a syringe (without the needle – your local vet can provide you with one). Hold the dogs mouth closed and insert the syringe in through the side of the mouth. If you have someone to help you, keep the mouth closed with one hand, with the nose facing upward, and with the other hand open the lower jaw. Then someone can inject into the mouth. Tickle the adams apple or block nose and your dog will swallow.

HOW DO I PUT EARDROPS IN MY DOG'S EAR EFFECTIVELY?

If your dog is sitting, the liquid will penetrate the ear much better. So get your dog to sit down then pull his/her ear up and place the ear drops in the ear. Your dog will usually try to shake it's head, so try giving a massage on the base of the ear to distract them, they love it!

WHAT BREED OF DOG SHOULD I BUY?

Take the size of your house or apartment into account when you are choosing what breed of dog you want. There are also many other things to consider, energy levels, malting, barking, anxiety etc. Come in for a free Nurse Consultation if you are having trouble deciding the right breed for you.

WHAT DO I NEED TO CONSIDER BEFORE I BUY A DOG?

Before you commit to owning a dog, make sure that you have enough time to dedicate to its training and upbringing. Puppies are cute and cuddly, but they grow into dogs who need to be exercised, they also require lots of love and attention. Plus, during puppy stage they need to be fed multiple times during a day and let out of the house several times for potty breaks. Also consider the costs, both initial and ongoing. You'll need to take your young pup for vaccinations and annual exams. All dogs are a big commitment, but they have excellent health benefits for the family such as improving fitness and providing company.

SHOULD MY CAT HAVE AN ANNUAL CHECK UP?

Definitely! Cats age approximately 5 years to 1 human year, so annual check ups for cats are like us going to doctor once every 5 years. Vaccinations are also important to your cat's health. All cats, even indoor cats, need to be vaccinated every 1 to 3 years depending on their risk of catching disease. Viruses can travel through the air or, they can even be brought into your house on people's hands or clothing. Then there's the risk of an indoor cat getting out, or, that a disease-carrying cat may wander into your yard or house.

SHOULD MY DOG HAVE AN ANNUAL CHECK UP?

Yes. Dogs age a lot faster than humans, so annual check ups for dogs are like us going to doctor once every few years. Dogs need regular vaccinations. There are different options available when vaccinating your dog. Some vaccinations like Kennel Cough for example need to be done annually, where as others like parvo virus and distemper virus vaccinations are available in yearly or 3 yearly applications. You may also need a blood test or some other type of treatment for you dog. Your vet will help you decide on the right and preventative treatments for your pet.

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT FLEA TREATMENT IS GOOD FOR MY DOG OR CAT?

There are plenty of good flea treatments available for your pets. If your cat or dog doesn't respond well to tablets, you can use the flea products where you place it on the back of your pets

neck. The best idea is to speak to your vet to get the right advice. Also remember to treat all pets and the environment as this is where fleas breed. For cats, avoid flea products containing permethrins as they are very toxic to cats.

SHOULD I GIVE MY NEW PUPPY TOYS TO CHEW?

Give your new puppy some toys to chew. All puppies like to chew things. This is normal behaviour and also helps teething. A few different toys for your new puppy are a good idea, as different chew toys do different things, and your dog won't get bored. You can get teething toys, toys where you can place treats inside so they have to problem solve to get to the treats, rope toys etc. Ask your local vet or pet store for some chew toys and they will be able to help you pick the right size for your new pup.

HOW DO I REMOVE A TICK FROM A DOG OR CAT?

Put a good size dollop of Vaseline onto and around the tick. Let this sit for about ten minutes. The tick will loosen his hold to get air, then you can simply wipe it away with a tissue. Another good way to remove them is to use open scissors or a fork to push sideways at base of tick. This will push tick out with the head attached Remember: Don't use a hot needle or any other instrument that will cause the tick to panic. The tick tends to regurgitate what it has injected back into the host. This can be as bad as leaving the tick in. Any disease the tick carries can be transmitted to your pet. Pull tick up with tweezers as this leaves the head imbedded and cause a local reaction.

WHAT IS HIP DYSPLASIA AND WHAT BREEDS DOES IT AFFECT?

Hip Dysplasia causes debilitating arthritis due to loose hips from an early age. It affects all giant and large breeds including Labradors, Golden Retrievers, German Shepherds, Standard Poodles, Rottweilers and Great Danes, and all cross breeds of the above.

CAN HIP DYSPLASIA BE DETECTED AT A YOUNG AGE AND WHY IS THIS BETTER FOR MY DOG?

Hip Dysplasia can be diagnosed with a simple PennHIP x-ray from as young as 16 weeks of age. By detecting at this early age, Hip Dysplasia can be prevented. Early diagnosis (16 to 20 weeks of age) means a simple operation called Juvenile Pubic Symphysodesis (JPS) can be performed to "tighten" the hip joints and reduce the chance of arthritis later in life. VetMed will also help you to ensure your dog has strict weight control and will put your dog onto the right diet and supplements that may include Omega 3 Oils for example.

What Are Dewclaws?

A dewclaw is a non-weight-bearing toe on an animal's paw located on the inside of the leg near the carpus ("wrist" area). Dewclaws slightly resemble human thumbs but they do not have the same functionality. Dogs and cats are typically born with two front dewclaws, but some may have one or more dewclaws on the rear limbs as well.

Dewclaws contain nerves, blood vessels, and a nail that grows just like the other toenails. The dewclaw usually contains bones, is firmly attached to the leg, and can be slightly moved by the animal. However, some dewclaws—especially rear dewclaws in dogs—contain no bones and appear to hang from the side of the leg. The nail grows as normal, but there is no bony attachment and no motor function in the digit.

What Is the Purpose of Dewclaws?

Some people may think that front dewclaws serve no purpose for today's dogs and cats. After all, dogs and cats without dewclaws do not seem to experience limitations. While the dewclaws are not essential, they can be quite useful for many reasons. Dewclaws can help dogs and cats dig, climb, and hold objects or prey. When dogs run, their dewclaws make some contact with the ground and can serve to stabilize the carpus. Watch a dog or cat handling a toy or treat, and you may notice the use of the dewclaws to stabilize the object.

Rear dewclaws are another matter. These are considered vestigial structures that serve no function for dogs and cats. Rear dewclaws are present at birth and occur due to a genetic trait. Dog breeds like the [Great Pyrenees](#) and [Beauceron](#) are born with one or more rear dewclaws;

this is actually part of the breed standard. Mixed breed dogs may be born with rear dewclaws as well. [Polydactyl cats](#) have a genetic mutation that causes them to be born with several extra toes, often including extra dewclaws.

Should Dewclaws Be Removed?

Some dog breeders remove puppies' dewclaws and dock their tails around 5-7 days old. This may be done because of the belief that the dewclaws serve no purpose and may become injured. It is also sometimes done to create a cleaner look for the [show ring](#) and to conform to breed standards.

Although dewclaw injuries may occur, they are not typically serious and may be avoided by keeping the nails trimmed short. Many vets are moving away from the practice of dewclaw removal in young puppies and prefer to let dogs keep these potentially useful digits. However, don't worry if your dog has already had his dewclaws removed; this will not limit them in any significant way.

Detached dewclaws in dogs may be removed during spay or neuter surgery to avoid future injuries. These floppy dewclaws are more likely to get injured than attached dewclaws.

Cat dewclaw removal is not typically done unless it is part of a complete declaw surgery. [Feline declawing](#) is the amputation of the last bones of the toes that contain the nails. This is a major surgery for cats and many experts now advise against it in favor of more [humane alternatives](#).

Dewclaw Problems in Dogs and Cats

Dewclaws often cause no problems for dogs and cats. However, there are situations when [nail problems](#) occur. Most commonly, dewclaws may grow too long, curve, and grow into the skin of the paw pad. This can lead to pain, inflammation, and infection.

Dewclaws may get caught on objects like rocks, plants, and bedding, especially if the nails are too long. This is more common in dogs and may occur while they are running and playing. If a toenail gets caught on something, it may tear the nail or even fracture the toe. Detached dewclaws are more likely to snag on something and cause injury because the digit has no motor function and hangs freely.

Most dewclaw problems can be avoided by checking the nails regularly and trimming the nails as needed. Learn [how to trim dog nails](#) and [how to trim cat nails](#) so you can keep your pet's nails healthy. Contact your veterinarian if you have any concerns about your pet's dewclaws.

Do Dogs Have Emotions?

Yes, undeniably. The trick is to be able to read your dog's body language and behavioral cues to know just what emotion they are feeling at any given time. We, as humans, like to anthropomorphize our own emotions about situations onto our dogs, but if you stick with the basics of dog body language, you will be able to know how your dog is feeling and what they are trying to communicate to you. While they can't verbalize what emotion they are feeling, they can still communicate how they are feeling through their behavior and body language. Certain behaviors are correlated with being happy, relaxed, scared, stressed, and even painful. By understanding your dog's [body language](#) you can better understand your dog's emotional state.

Sadness vs. Separation Anxiety

Some dog owners may think their dog is sad when they leave the home. In the videos where people leave a room and leave their dog alone, the dog may start to [whine](#), bark, and howl. They may paw and scratch at the door the person left through. They may even begin to pace back and forth, looking out windows and panting. An owner may see their dog acting this way and think their dog is sad, but these are all signs of stress and [separation anxiety](#). While we can't definitively say, 'this dog is sad because his owner left', thanks to research done by dog behaviorists, we can say with certainty 'this dog is stressed'.

Shame & Guilt vs. Submissive Behavior

Similarly, you may catch your dog doing something they know they aren't allowed to do and think they're hanging their head in guilt. Dogs in so-called 'dog shaming' videos seem to be in a cowering stance that we, the viewer, perceive as shame. They may be avoiding their owner, either by averting their gaze or by actually trying to get away. They may even be submissively laying down on their side or back. You may watch these videos and think, 'that dog knows he did something wrong and is feeling guilty because he got caught'. The dogs in these videos, though,

are all showing behavioral cues of a dog being [submissive](#). We may think the dog is trying to avoid us out of guilt and shame, but thanks to behavioral research we know that dogs can actually read our own body language³. Dogs know when we are upset and will be submissive to try and appease us. This is a normal behavior in dogs and doesn't necessarily mean a dog has been abused in the past.

Fear vs. Stubbornness

Not all dogs enjoy going to the vet—some are downright terrified of it. These dogs will try to make themselves as small as possible, cowering and hanging their head low. They may try to hide behind you or even try to run away when the vet or technician approaches them. These are relatively easy cues to pick up on. What about the dogs that hide in the corner and then growl and snap when you try to get them onto the exam table? You may get frustrated with your dog for acting silly and stubborn, but he's actually acting out of fear. Remember, in a stressful situation animals will resort to fight or flight. If a dog tries to flee and they can't get away, they will resort to fight. Generally, these patients do worse with 'strong arming' or 'man-handling' just to get done whatever needs to get done. There are veterinarians and veterinary technicians that are certified fear free and/or low stress handling certified. These professionals know how to approach a dog that is fearful of the vet to not only get everything done, but to do it in a way that is the least stressful on your dog.

While more and more professionals are learning more about [fear free](#) and low stress handling, not all professionals may be proficient at it yet. You know your dog best, so don't be afraid to advocate if they are terrified at the vet and you think the vet or tech is being too forceful.

Why Do Dogs Sigh?

This may seem like a silly question, but it's important to know the difference between a sigh and other, low-level noises your dog may make like moaning and groaning. A sigh isn't actually a true vocalization. Rather, a dog sigh is essentially just a deep exhale. A moan and a groan may have a bit of a whine to it as your dog vocalizes with their vocal chords as they exhale.

When it comes to dog behavior, a lot of the research revolves around [body language](#). This is because we can actually tell a lot about how a dog is feeling emotionally² and what a dog is trying to say based on their body language³.

. But there are sounds and vocalizations dogs make to communicate as well. When your dog sighs, they are trying to communicate with you. What they are trying to tell you can depend on what is going on in your dog's environment and dog's physical, emotional, and mental health.

Can Dogs See in the Dark?

Dogs are able to see much better than humans in low-light conditions. While they cannot see much in absolute darkness, they can see quite well in dark conditions where only the smallest amounts of light are present. Canine eyes are able to take in small amounts of light and process images that humans would never see in the dark. A nightlight, streetlight, flashlight, or even the moon and stars can provide enough light for dogs to see almost as well as they see in bright light.

How Dogs See in Low Light?

On the surface, a dog's eye may seem much like the eye of a human. However, there are some very important differences in the structure of a dog's eye that give them superior night vision. Animal and human eyes are able to receive images in similar ways: light enters the eye through the cornea, which bends the light to help focus the image. Some of the light passes through the [pupil](#)—how much depends on the opening of the pupil. The muscles in the iris control how dilated or constricted the pupils are depending on light conditions. A dog's pupil opens wider than a human's pupil, allowing more light in.

What to Do If Your Dog's Night Vision Is Poor?

Some dogs seem to see better in the dark than others, but it's safe to say that most see much better than humans. If you think your dog doesn't see well at night, there may be an eye-related reason for it. If you notice that your dog used to see well in the dark but now struggles with night vision, there could be an eye problem causing vision loss.

Many dogs experience some degree of vision loss as they age. At first, you may notice this vision loss more at night than during the day. Age-related eye changes such as [lenticular sclerosis](#) can limit a dog's eyesight, especially in dim light. [Cataracts](#) may develop and progressively worsen, causing loss of eyesight that is more noticeable in darker conditions. Contact your veterinarian if your dog's vision seems to be changing. Your vet may be able to determine the cause and offer treatment that can prevent [blindness](#).

Why Does My Cat Lay On My Chest?

There are a few reasons why cats enjoy laying on humans (especially on their chests). In general, it comes down to the bond you share with your cat. Many humans love the feeling of having a cat on their chest. Spending this time to snuggle and bond is one way you can [show your cat love](#).

Should You Stop Your Cat From Laying on Your Chest?

In general, there is no harm in allowing your cat to lay on your chest. However, some people find it unpleasant, especially if the cat stays there for a long time. Having a cat on your chest can be soothing and wonderful, but it also can be uncomfortable, especially if you are trying to sleep. A cat on your chest may restrict your breathing, especially if you have a large cat. A startled cat may accidentally claw you or your clothing. A cat on you in bed may reduce the quality of your sleep and cause you to wake up frequently throughout the night. If you have allergies, your cat's hair and dander may be irritating.

You may be able to reduce the amount of time your cat spends on you by providing a pleasant alternative. You may even be able to prevent your cat from lying on your chest completely if that's something you really want. Start by getting a plush, roomy [cat bed](#); a heated bed is best. Place a worn item of clothing in the cat bed so your scent will be there. When your cat gets on your chest at an undesired time, gently move the cat to the bed. Offer pets and praise while your cat is in the bed. It may take some time to get this to work. In addition, you may find that your cat prefers an old box or laundry hamper over the new bed because that's just what cats do!

Why Do Cats Eat Grass?

There are a few different theories about why cats eat grass, and one of them might look familiar if you have a dog with a similar affinity for noshing on those long green blades.

How to Stop Your Cats Eating Grass

You don't necessarily need to stop your cat from eating grass, but as their benevolent caregiver, it's still your responsibility to ensure that this habit doesn't end up with any harmful consequences. Here are some ways to let your kitty enjoy eating grass without having to worry that it might be doing more harm than good.

1. **Only let them graze in untreated areas** – While grass is just fine for your cat, pesticides, herbicides, and other chemical-based treatments that might be *on* the grass certainly aren't. Keep your cat out of the yard if your own lawn is treated with any of these toxic products so that you can be sure your cat isn't ingesting them.
2. **Plant a healthy indoor cat garden** – Cats who spend all of their time indoors may also enjoy snacking on grass or other greens every once in a while. In addition to making sure that you only keep [non-toxic plants](#) in your home, consider putting in a noshing station for your kitty complete with edible grassy treats like catnip, barley grass, wheat grass, or oat grass.
3. **Pay attention to your cat's reactions** – If your cat is vomiting or experiencing diarrhea every time (or most times) they eat grass, then that may be a sign something is off in their ability to eat grass or in their general diet. In this case, make sure to keep them away from the lawn, and make an appointment with your vet to get them checked out. You should also take your cat to the vet if you know that your cat has eaten grass that has been chemically treated.

Types of Plants That Cats Can Eat

If your cat loves to eat grass, then they may also like having access to other types of healthy edible plants. Here are some that you may want to grow in your garden for them or plant in that indoor kitty noshing station mentioned above:

- Catnip

- Mint
- Lemongrass
- Licorice root
- Valerian
- Alfalfa
- Parsley
- Other grasses, including cat grass, oat grass, barley grass, and wheatgrass

What Is Catnip?

The *Nepeta cataria* [plant](#), more commonly known as catnip, belongs to the *Lamiaceae* plant family. This family also includes herbs such as rosemary, oregano, basil, and sage. This family of plant also contains *Nepeta musinii*, or catmint, which can also attract cats. Catnip can be found wild in Europe, Asia, and North America. Besides attracting cats, it has been shown to be an effective mosquito repellent. The leaves, stems, and flowers of catnip produce an aromatic oil that contains a compound called nepetalactone. This is the compound that your cat is reacting to when they react to catnip.

How to Give Catnip?

[Catnip](#) can be purchased in a few different forms. Dried catnip can be bought in tubs, and there are sprays containing the nepetalactone oil. You can even grow catnip in your yard! Keeping a tub of dried catnip around can refresh your cat's toys and can also aid in toy rotation.

Toy rotation is something that you can do to help create a mentally enriching home environment. Instead of leaving all of your cat's toys out all of the time, keep a portion of them in a plastic storage container sprinkled with dried catnip. Once a week, give the container a shake and rotate new toys in as you pick up old toys from around your house.

Dried catnip tends to work better to refresh toys than sprays, as the sprays tend to have less nepetalactone in them. The oils in dried catnip can still dissipate over time, though. Store any unused dried catnip in the freezer to extend its shelf life.

Dried catnip can also be sprinkled on top of new beds and scratching posts/toys. This can encourage your cat to their new toys and beds, instead of [scratching up your furniture](#).

How Cats See Boxes?

Cats are naturally inquisitive. When something new shows up in their environment, they will investigate it to determine if it's safe, if it's a toy, or if it's potential food. Cats are known predators. A box is an enclosed, confined space that your cat may see as the perfect place to hide and lay in wait to ambush prey.

Some folks forget that, although cats are predators, cats are also prey for a lot of wild animals. An enclosed box may also provide your cat with a safe hiding place. In fact, boxes may make your cat feel so safe that your cat may like to hide out inside one when stressed or when there are environmental changes in their home. Hiding is a coping mechanism for [cats dealing with different environmental stressors](#).

How to Foster Positive Experiences with Boxes?

If your cat has their heart set on sleeping in boxes, there are things you can do to keep them safe and comfortable. Place soft blankets and some of your cat's favorite toys in the box. You can spray their blankets with a calming pheromone such as [Feliway](#) to make them feel even more comfortable. Cats like being near their family, so leave the box in an area of the home where you normally hang out, like the family room or the bedroom.

Many Cats Evolved to Dislike Water

It is believed that cats were domesticated 9,500 years ago in the middle east. They evolved in arid desert climates and were not exposed to rivers, lakes, and rain. This resulted in present day cats mostly avoiding bodies of water. Even community cats often seek shelter from rain and thunderstorms. Hiding from water has become an instinct in present day cats.

This is not true of all breeds though, as some breeds of cats enjoy being in the water due to their own evolutionary background. The Turkish Van and the Turkish Angora, for example, are known for their love of water and swimming abilities. They adapted to their climate in the Lake Van

region of Turkey by shedding their hair in the summer to swim and fish. Some other breeds that are more likely to enjoy water are the [Bengal](#), [Maine Coon](#), and American Bobtail.

Do Cats Need Baths?

As aforementioned, cats do a wonderful job of keeping themselves clean and can spend up to 40% of the day cleaning themselves, so you may never need to [bathe your cat](#). Cats may need a medical bath due to a skin issue and [senior](#), arthritic, and overweight cats may have a hard time reaching certain parts of their body. A bath may also be necessary if the cat happens to roll in something sticky or smelly.

How Can I Get My Cat to Enjoy Baths?

Before the Bath Acclimate to the space. To get your cat comfortable with water, try acclimating her to the tub weeks before a bath, so she can get used to the space. Place your cat in an empty tub or sink with toys, catnip, or treats so that she makes positive associations with the location. Try spreadable treats, like a small amount of squeeze cheese, whip cream, or anchovy paste, and spread it on the tub for your cat to lick.

Once your cat is comfortable with playing and eating treats in the sink or tub, fill the tub with an inch or two of warm water and scatter toys throughout the bath so she can have some fun with it. Encourage your cat to play with the toys and reinforce her with praise and treats when she does. Have everything ready prior to [bathing the cat](#). Be sure to be prepared with everything you need. This includes shampoo specifically made for cats, special treats and toys your cat loves, warm towels, a plastic cup for pouring water over your cat, and a non-slip surface, such as a rubber liner, and a bath mat or towel to place in the sink or bathtub for your cat to stand on.

Create a calm environment. Close the door and keep noises to a minimum. Be calm and speak softly. If your spray attachment is noisy, rinse your cat with cups of water instead. If you are stressed, [your cat will be too!](#)

Q: Is it okay for my bird to be in air conditioning?

A: It's fine so long as the air doesn't blow directly on him or the cage. Also be sure to have your unit cleaned so that you're not blowing mold spores on him. Direct sun or overheated rooms are much more difficult and harmful for a bird to adjust to.

Q: My bird is afraid of the dark and can't find his way back to his cage when I turn out the light in his room.

A: If your bird seems to be frightened when you turn off a light, maybe you should first return him to the cage and then turn off the light. Some birds have "night frights" if something disturbs them. Try using a night light by his cage. It won't disturb his sleep and might alleviate his darkness fright.

Q: What is the correct ratio of pellets, seed mix, fruits and veggies to feed my parrot?

A: Unfortunately, I can't give any scientifically correct formulas or ratios of dietary ingredients. There just isn't one. So much depends upon the age, health, activity and species of a bird. I can only offer suggestions (as per my web page at www.plannedparrothood.com/diet.html based upon my 30-year experience of feeding and breeding multiple species. A one-bird owner has much more flexibility in offering a bigger variety of foods than does a breeder. Native birds in the wild eat very simply and eat what's available seasonally to them. My motto would be "Plain, Simple and Seasonal".

Q: My bird is very friendly. If I let my bird be held by a stranger when out and about, can I get insurance against bites?

A: Yes, you can if you currently don't have regular liability coverage through your homeowners' or renter's policy. Just be prepared to pay a hefty sum for it or a hefty increase in your premiums on existing insurance. If you inquire to your current insurance company about the bird, your insurance might automatically go up! In NY it would. Normally, if you have homeowners' or renters' insurance, the liability would cover a bird bite. Otherwise, you could be held liable for an incident should it occur. A court of law would have to make a decision on that if your insurance didn't cover it. Read all the fine print on what your liability covers if you have insurance. If not,

you might want to consult with a lawyer about this because even the friendliest of birds can have a bad moment, especially if a stranger taunts the bird.

Q: I would like to know what kind of wire is safe for making an outdoor aviary for too's, tiels, and lovebirds?

A: The most common wire and easiest to cut would be GAW (galvanized after welding) - 12 gauge 1x1 for cockatoos, and maybe 14 gauge 1/2x1 for the smaller birds. It's wise to scrub down the wire with water and vinegar before using the cages to remove any minute metallic pieces that could be ingested by the birds.

A WORD OF CAUTION: The cages should have bottoms and be hung up off the ground to avoid burrowing creatures from getting in. Birds should never be left alone in outdoor caging unless there is a double wired enclosure surrounding them. Otherwise, you do risk animals or even birds of prey grabbing the birds from the outside of the cage. It just takes seconds for them to do this. If your birds are full-flighted, you also risk losing them while transferring them to the outdoor flight. If the outdoor flights are permanent housing, they will need a roof for protection from the elements.

Q: I just found a bird. What do I do now?

A: 1. First of all, check your local papers for ads. Report the bird to your local police station. Don't reveal the band numbers to anyone who might call you. They should have a record of the ID numbers and also other physical characteristics and talking ability in order to ID the bird. Don't offer any of that to the callers. People also post flyers in the neighborhood and in local stores and pet shops. Local vets are also sometimes notified of their loss.

2. If you haven't already posted this FaceBook, please do so. Then there is a major website for lost and found birds where you can post the info: BIRDS 911.

3. Check online for your local bird clubs and report the bird to them.

Q: Do parrots have a good sense of smell?

A: Yes. Most parrots have a keen sense of smell. It's believed that they exude an aroma to attract a mate.

Q: Do parrots see in color?

A: Yes. They may even see a broader spectrum of colors than humans do.

Q: Do parrots have tastebuds?

A: Yes. They have approximately 350 as opposed to the 9000 that humans have. They are located in the back of the throat and the base of the tongue. Their taste buds can differentiate sweet, sour, bitter and salty tastes.

Q: My parakeet escaped from the cage when it was cold out and is now fluffed up, is not responding much or eating, puts her head inside her back between feathers and is batting her eyes and yawning and stretching frequently, breathing funny, and sitting in one spot for long periods of time. We don't have any money to be able to afford a vet. I love my bird and am scared she's dying. What can I do? Please help.

A: I get this type of letter all too often. It's very sad, but once a bird exhibits these symptoms, it needs emergency veterinary care - antibiotic injections, handfeeding, and a nebulizer or brooder for heat. Most vets will work with their small bird clients if they have no money. It doesn't hurt to ask. If you truly cannot afford to give any kind of pet lifesaving professional help, then you should not ever own one. It is always good to establish a relationship with an avian specialist in case of an emergency such as this even if it is just calling to set up an account with them for such unforeseen events.

Q: I am a new bird owner of birds that appear to be healthy and are on a varied diet. What does a common well-bird checkup consist of? I called an avian vet, and the receptionist said that some people have a visual checkup and a gram stain done, and some have blood work done. Is the blood work necessary at this point? They knock the birds out to take blood samples. Is this necessary since they seem healthy and normal? How much should expect to spend on this first checkup?

A: I personally don't believe in "well-bird" checkups for the simple reason that you may expose perfectly healthy birds to disease by bringing them in to a vet's office. A good avian veterinarian would probably do a routine visual and palpitation check, gram stain, a chlamydia blood test, and a complete blood panel. The blood would ideally be drawn from the jugular vein in the neck. Unless you suspect that the bird isn't quite right, it's not necessary to have all this done. In NO way should a bird be put under anesthesia for these simple processes. There is no pain at all associated with any of the above. BEWARE of any vet who would risk putting your bird under for these routine tests! Your costs could run as much as \$600 for these tests and the office visit.

Q: How can I tell if my bird is catching a cold?

A: Birds do not catch "colds". They do, however, come down with viral and bacterial infections. If your bird is lethargic, has a nasal discharge, is fluffed, sneezes alot, isn't eating properly, etc., you need to get him to a vet for an evaluation and treatment ASAP! By the time that birds show symptoms, their systems are already compromised and they can go downhill fast. There are also diseases that you can get from them that could possibly be fatal to you even after a bird dies. Find a good avian vet to determine what the problem is. It might also only be dietary.

Q: My bird sneezes repeatedly. What could be wrong?

A: There are different types of sneezes that might give you a clue. Repeated wet or dry sneezing could be due either to something stuck in the nostrils (nares) or allergies to environmental causes such as mold, mold mycotoxins, VOCs (toxins in the air, or other allergic airborne irritants. Sometimes it can even be dust from another bird. Occasional dry sneezing is normal. Wet sneezing with or without a wheeze or clicking chest sound can be present when a bird has an infection. This is when you hurry the bird to the vet.

Q: We have a Congo African Grey female and she is 10 weeks old and eating good on her own most of the time. We have not planned to give her a seed diet unless it may be necessary. My question is: at what age should she start eating seed and which seed would you recommend? She eats some pellets and really likes beans of any kind, fruits and veggies too. She seems to like spicy hot stuff and oatmeal. This is our first bird so we just want to be on the safe side. Many thanks.

A: First of all, let me say that buying an unweaned bird is very risky for many reasons. Secondly, to answer your questions, yes, the bird is now old enough to crack seed or start playing with it anyway. Greys will even sometimes wean at this age. I recommend any good fresh seed that is clean and not dusty. Most of the major manufacturers have nice clean seed mixes now. It is very risky to buy seed meant for outdoor birds or supermarket bird mixes. You're safer buying from a store that specializes in birds and buying only in airtight plastic or can wrapped containers. This way you're generally assured of fresh mix with good store turnover sales. See our diet page for more information on a good recommended diet.

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Q: My bird just died and I would like to know why. Should I have it necropsied?

A: It's always wise to necropsy a bird that has died from an unknown cause (accidents, etc.). In order to properly necropsy a bird, it should immediately be lathered with a mild dish detergent, placed in a plastic bag and then refrigerated - NEVER frozen! If the vet finds no apparent cause

of death upon gross necropsy, then tissue from the major organs, including the brain, should be sent to a special lab for further histology. The reason for testing is to determine whether the bird may have had something that could potentially be transmitted to you. One disease is chlamydia, or formerly known as psittacosis or parrot fever, which can be fatal to humans if not properly diagnosed and treated accordingly.

Q: My next door neighbor came home one night and found her pet cockatiel was bleeding and stumbling around in the cage. Within 10 minutes, she said the bird had died. The bird was about 8 years old and they had just moved into the house in the last two months. I am no vet so I am hoping, that you may have an idea for me.

A: Without having a vet do a gross necropsy and determine the need for histology, there is no way to know for sure why the bird died. Hopefully, it wasn't from anything zoonotic (contagious to humans). That is why there is a need for testing upon the death of a bird. Yes, it's costly, but absolutely necessary. The bird could have died from a number of things: stroke, bad diet, injury, lung hemorrhaging from toxic poisoning (another good reason to do histology), etc. You didn't mention where the bird was bleeding from. There have been cases of birds dying from new carpet formaldehyde fumes and the use of new appliances with Teflon coatings. If anything had been sprayed around the bird, that could have caused it. No telling now, unfortunately.

Q: My vet uses the dremel to trim and smooth the nails and beak of my bird. The bird doesn't like it. Does this hurt him?

A: Yes, it would hurt the beak, as there are nerves extending from the top of the mandible to the tip of the beak. A beak should never have to be trimmed or smoothed cosmetically unless there is a misalignment or unless a disease such as fatty liver causes it to overgrow. Then blood tests are recommended to determine why it is overgrowing and correct it through diet and/or environment.

Nails should never have to be trimmed either unless someone (breeder or vet) starts trimming indiscriminately. I highly recommend a concrete swing to keep the tips blunted. You can also use a disinfected large rock or stone in the cage for this purpose. If nails are grossly overgrown, it might be due to an internal unseen problem such as fatty liver disease. In this case, simple bloodwork would confirm it. NEVER let anyone cosmetically trim nails or beaks. It then becomes a vicious circle of continual trimming.

Q: Our cockatiel is constantly nipping at our fingers. Do you have any advice on how to stop this?

A: The "nipping" is common for cockatiels. They are telling you that they don't like the way they are being handled. It may be that you are handling the bird too often or maybe handling it too roughly. I prefer sweet talking a bird out of bad behavior rather than the firm NO's. They're much like toddlers and will test those no's. It's the love and gentleness in your voice that commands the results that you want. I also prefer to let them know they've hurt me (if it really did hurt) by saying "OW" and then sadly saying "You hurt me". If it didn't hurt, you could say, "What do you think you're doing" and kind of laugh about it. Then say "I love you" or whatever endearing phrase you might want to use.

Q: We've yet to attempt to clip the feathers of our Cockatiel. We would appreciate some guidance and any advice on this procedure.

A: The best way to learn to clip wings is to watch someone do it for the first time. Before clipping any bird's wings, each wing must be lifted to examine for "blood feathers". These are new feathers that are coming in that still have a supply of blood through the shaft. If they are cut, profuse bleeding can occur. Corn starch, flour or hot candle wax can stop a broken feather from bleeding, but the safest measure is to firmly grab the feather closest to the skin and pull it out. Then you should squeeze the skin shut and put some pressure on it for a minute. All bleeding

should stop. Generally, the first 10 primary feathers on both wings are cut back (to the bend in the wing). Cockatiels may need extra feathers clipped, as they can get good lift with a mild wing clip. NEVER leave 1 or more feathers for "show clips". Without the other feathers to protect it, it is very vulnerable to being broken. Never clip up underneath the secondary tier of feathers. You will permanently damage the feather follicle. Clip both wings evenly.

Q: I have a 10 year old female Amazon who recently started screaming at the top of her lungs. The only way to keep her quiet is to cover the cage. I have tried giving her more attention, adding toys to her cage, increasing her away from the cage time, and anything else I can think of, but to no avail. Any advise you can give would be greatly appreciated.

A: This is a common problem with birds who yearn for more attention or want to breed. They will do their "call" in the morning and evening. Once they learn this behavior, it is difficult if not impossible to break the habit. My advice would be to look for someone who breeds these birds and sell the bird as a breeder. Then you'd all be happy. It's terribly unfair to punish the bird by covering it because it wants attention. I'm sure that the last thing you would want is a neurotic bird on your hands. The next behavioral change could be plucking itself or even mutilating itself. Maybe you can think back to what the changes were that affected the bird and correct it (attention time, etc.). Now, the only other thing that I recommend is that you take the bird for a thorough checkup to a good avian specialist to do bloodwork and x-rays. Perhaps the bird is hurting inside and this is a discomfort or distress cry. Not being there and hearing it, I can't tell you if it is or not.

Q: Are both male and female talking breeds capable of being taught to talk or is only one gender able to talk?

A: Much depends upon the species of bird. For instance, Amazon hens are generally better talkers than the males, but they both will talk to some degree. With other species, the degree of talking ability depends upon many other factors such as: individual personality, species, happiness, the person teaching the bird, and overall general health. You can try singing the phrases you want the bird to learn. They are more eager to learn to say things that are heard in a lilting or excited tone.

Q: I have a Nanday Conure that was hatched in April, and my mother has another from the same clutch. We live in different houses about 100 yards apart, so the birds don't get to see each other. My mother's bird is already talking some, but my bird has only said one word, one time. When we bought them, they said Nash could talk. My question is how long does it take a bird to talk? I am curious as to why these two clutch mates are so different and why if Nash did talk, why has he quit.

A: Nandays can be excellent talkers if given a good start from a breeder who handfeeds at an early age. The degree of talking ability varies from bird to bird depending on many factors: individual personality, good diet, exercise, contentment with their owner, and the manner in which a bird is taught to speak. Most birds will learn to speak more readily if you almost sing to them the phrases or words that you want them to say. The more excited you seem as you verbalize, the more they will want to repeat. Repetition doesn't work. Monotonous recordings don't work. Saying the appropriate thing at the right time with inflection in your voice works. For instance, when you feed them their favorite treat and say "Yummy, yummy", they will be more inclined to say that on their own later on. Some birds also take longer to learn to talk than others. Watch their eyes as you speak or sing. If they dilate and you see their beak open and their tongue move, they want to learn.

Q: We have a 16 month old sexed female Congo African Grey. She has a stable temperment and is not nearly as neurotic as greys are often described. My question is in regards to her speech. She just began talking within the last two months. Her voice when she speaks is pretty "gravelly" but she seems to be trying to improve it by the various "throaty" sounds she makes. Yes she did whistle before she talked and mimics the wild

birds outside perfectly. Will the tone of her voice improve with new words ? Will the tone of the phrases she currently knows improve ? Anything we can do to help her ? My next question concerns getting another bird that would be most compatible with her. They would of course have their own cages and be in separate but adjoining rooms. Should we wait until she's older to adopt another bird?

A: African Greys are generally slow starters with talking, but when they start, they can be exceptional. It sounds like your Grey is doing very well and is practicing. Before long, it will imitate different voices in different tones. Give it some time. The best way to get birds to talk is to almost sing the phrases you want them to learn. The inflection in your voice helps alot. They pick up things that interest them, not necessarily phrases that you want them to learn. So far as another bird, I believe that your Grey is young enough to accept a newcomer, whatever the species, so long as you continue to give the same amount of attention to the Grey. Some older Greys might get depressed with a new bird that is getting alot of attention, causing them to start to pluck. Others are not so sensitive.

Q: I have a 30-year old Red-Lored Amazon. If it has never laid any eggs, is it safe to assume that it is a male?

A: No. Although many hens of that age will lay an egg by then, many also don't. The only safe way to know what sex the bird is would be to have it either surgically sexed or DNA sexed. There is much less risk with DNA feather or blood sexing that with surgical sexing. If you don't intend to breed the bird, do a DNA test. You can also contact Amazon breeders to give you their educated guess as to what sex the bird is by shape and size of head, feather colorations, mannerisms, etc.

Q: I am interested in hatching parrot eggs but, I am not sure where to look for a supplier that I can trust. If possible, can you give me some guidance in this matter? Thanks.

A: Trusted breeders don't sell their eggs. They may have others incubate, hatch and feed for them if you're very experienced at doing so, but they don't sell them. Even slight jarring or temp fluctuation during transport can kill the embryos, so it's a very risky thing altogether. There are so many unscrupulous scammers out there looking to take advantage of people like yourself.

Artificial incubation is difficult unless you have state of the art equipment. It is best left up to the parent birds to hatch successfully. You may spend more than you would have in the long run because of the factors involved. First, the egg has to be fertile. Then it must hatch and the chick must survive. Unless you're a very experienced breeder, you may be in for a tremendous disappointment. Eggs must be candled, weighed, observed with an experienced eye, and may need hatching assistance which can be very tricky and a matter of life and death. Certain species require different incubating temperatures and humidity. Then when the chick hatches, it must be fed and hydrated properly every 2 hours round the clock for the first few days very gradually tapering off from there. If you have bacterial or yeast problems, you must know what to do immediately. If you feel that you qualify to do this and know the breeder who is supplying the eggs well enough to trust him/her, then try it. Otherwise, it's a gamble and not fair to the little life inside that egg.

Q: My bird has passed thru several hands before coming to us. Is there any way to trace where and when she was hatched from her band ID?

A: If it is an open band, the bird was more than likely imported before 1987. If it is a closed band, you might want to contact L&M Bird Legbands, the American Federation of Aviculture, SPBE or one of the national organizations of breeders to trace the breeder.

Q: I am under the impression that it is very difficult to determine the gender of a bird. What is the most accurate and best way to figure out the sex of a bird?

A: With most species, there are no visible differences between males and females. There may be some subtle differences in certain species that only an experienced breeder might recognize. The least invasive way and least risky way to sex a bird is through feather or blood DNA sexing. It requires only a small amount of blood from a toenail or a new young blood feather. Surgical sexing is best reserved for breeders whose birds have not produced.

Q: My cockatiel has been laying many eggs, one clutch after another without a male. How do I get her to stop?

A: This is very common with cockatiels. If you have a nestbox, take it down. If not, a visit with an avian specialist is in order. There are a few options for you. One is the most drastic: hysterectomy. It is also risky. Another: hormones, which may have side effects. The other is to get her a mate and let her hatch some chicks. The third and best option is to buy some fake eggs to let her sit on and "incubate".

Right now, though, you do need to get calcium supplements into her. Without extra calcium, you risk many other unpleasant things such as eggbinding, prolapsed cloaca and much more. Get a good powdered supplement to put on the food or Neo-Calgluconate from your pharmacist for the water. Cuttlebone is not the best form of calcium for them. I recommend a good powdered all round vitamin/mineral/amino acid supplement for the food at all times. If you can get the cage into some sunshine for a little bit each day, that would be best. When administering calcium/Vitamin D, you need to be careful not to overdose.

Q: Do female blue front amazons lay eggs even if they are not with a male? I know that some forms of other birds do, such as cockatiels.

A: Yes, any bird, including your Amazon, can lay eggs without a male around. They won't be fertile, of course.

Q: I own two small parakeets. I am looking into buying a parrot, but have three dogs and two cats in my house. I also do not know a lot about birds. I would like to know what "proven" means when you look at ads. Also, are pet stores the best place to buy a parrot or would I be better off buying from a private dealer?

A: "Proven" means that a pair of birds has actually produced chicks. Generally, these birds do not make good pets. There are some exceptions. Each bird would have to be evaluated on an individual basis. In my opinion (perhaps biased a little, being a breeder), I would recommend getting your first baby bird from someone who is eager to spend time with you educating you about the diet, care and housing of the bird you intend to purchase. Whether it's a pet shop or a private breeder, the facility should be clean and take the time with you to answer your questions before and after purchase. The birds should look like they are well cared for - clean cages, varied diet with fresh fruits and veggies. If the sale stops there, then run! Be sure that you are able to contact the seller for any questions that you may have. Get the name and number of a good avian vet from them. You have to be aware of the fact that, if left out of the cage unsupervised, your other animals could kill the bird even inadvertently. It would be advantageous for you to join one of the avian lists mentioned on our chats/list page here. The breeders are very happy to help with questions from new bird owners. You may have to make choices from some of the varied opinions, but it's well worth joining.

Q: I have recently acquired a 15 year old, poorly socialized, Moluccan Cockatoo. I have no other birds and he is alone all day while I am at work. I have made some progress towards his socialization but do not have much hope that he will ever be a typical Moluccan. I have the opportunity to acquire an 8 year old female Moluccan who also has very underdeveloped social skills. Both birds appreciate having people around them but are very timid and frighten very easily, do not like to be handled, but will occasionally tolerate some touching and stroking. I would prefer not to begin a breeding program but would like to place these two lonely birds together. What can I do to allow them to become

companions without encouraging breeding? They would share the same room, each have their own cage, and be able to see and interact with each other without direct access to each other. I would like to offer the opportunity for them to share a play area when supervised. Is any of this advisable? What can I do to help them adjust to each other. What should I avoid?

A: Moluccans generally won't lay eggs without a nestbox. They may be inclined to mate though. I believe that if they get along, you would be able to house them together - providing both are healthy. This species is also unique in that they do not become vicious when they become bonded to a mate. Through the years, I've handled my male Moluccan in between periods of breeding. It's the rare Moluccan that has not been handled properly that becomes nasty. I doubt that you would have a problem allowing them to perch on a play area together.

Your concern about your male not ever becoming a "typical" Moluccan is unfounded. You might just need to become more aggressive in handling him. Toweling the bird to get him on your arm while sitting on the floor is a good exercise to try daily until the bird becomes used to getting on your arm by himself.

Q: What do the letters and numbers represent on my bird's legband?

A: Bird owners often inquire about where their birds have come from and refer to the letters and numbers on the legbands. This is very understandable, but it can also present a problem for both the breeder and the seller of the bird if they're not one and the same. Most sellers don't want their sources divulged and breeders who wholesale to them do not want phone calls or correspondence from the retail public because they just don't have time to address those inquiries. When buying a bird, the seller should be able to give you enough information (age, species, diet, etc.) about your bird so that you need not inquire about its origin.

If you've just purchased an older bird with a split or open band and want to know its approximate age, the band can help give you this information. This type of band is sometimes put on domestic babies, but most are probably quarantine bands in which case it would have 3 letters followed by 3 numbers on it or USDA engraved. You can inquire to the USDA for further info on these bands. Most importation of birds was stopped in 1992. Now only special permit birds are allowed to be imported and still have to go through quarantine.