

## When Birds Push You Away

### **Your pet bird will let you know when it would like to be petted**

*By Liz Wilson, CVT, CPBC*

Your bird will let you know if it does and does not want you to pet it.  
Courtesy Connie Perry, Ohio

Companion parrot behavior consultants are frequently asked why some parrots do not want to be petted, and this is a serious complaint — as if there is something wrong with the bird. However, depending on the individual and the circumstance, nothing could be further from the truth.

From my experience, when it comes to being petted, we see a wide variety of responses in parrots, ranging from those that do not like it at all, to those that like it entirely too much. When someone pressures a parrot to accept petting, birds that dislike it can respond in a variety of ways.

#### **No Means No**

At one end of the spectrum is the bird that simply runs away, leading some humans to conclude that the bird is afraid of their hands. In reality, of course, the bird is just resisting what the hand is trying to do. On the other end of the spectrum, some birds resort to biting, usually after exhausting every other means of communication.

Such was the case with a client whose mild-mannered African grey began biting when she tried to pet him. Upon questioning, she admitted that the bird pushed her hand away repeatedly before biting and, when he bit her, she would back off. This, of course, meant that the woman was making the unfortunate mistake of teaching her parrot two important lessons: first, that she did not respect the grey's right to resist being petted; and second, that an aggressive response was all that she understood.