

Show Respect For Your Parrot

Respect goes a long way when training your parrot

By Liz Wilson, CVT, CPBC

Showing your bird that you respect it will go a long way when you're training it. Courtesy Daniela Slanina, California

A couple of months ago, I had the pleasure of visiting aviculturists Brent and DeeAnna Andrus, and I totally enjoyed watching the manner in which Brent approached this issue. One of his African greys had been averse to being stroked and would bite when Brent tried to pet him. So Brent started rewarding his other birds with a nut whenever they allowed him to stroke their head.

Watching this, the African grey parrot caught on very quickly. This was, after all, an awfully easy way to earn a luscious treat! Once he learned to lower his head for a good petting, Brent gradually phased out the food reward, and now his African grey parrot puts his head down for the pure pleasure of a good scratch.

However, what was most important in my mind was the manner in which Brent approached the subject. He would move his hand close to the African grey at about chest level and say, "May I pet you?" If the African grey liked the idea, he would politely lower his head and offer the back of his neck. When he was not in the mood, he would just stare at Brent and keep his head erect — at which point, Brent would courteously back off.

In this manner, Brent was showing his African grey parrot tremendous respect. The African grey was allowed the decision about whether he wished to be touched, and Brent honored his feelings. It is the African grey parrot's body, after all, and he should be allowed to decide if he wants it touched or not!