

## Weird Cockatiel Behavior

**Check out these normal cockatiel behaviors that seem weird.**

*By Diane Grindol*

**Q:** My cockatiels are so weird! They hang upside down from the curtain rods and pound on their perches, and they have big flakes of dandruff in their feathers. What's going on?

Courtesy Stephanie Brandon, Virginia

Your cockatiel's weird behavior may be normal for the species.

**A:** There are some normal cockatiel behaviors that seem weird. Female cockatiels often hang upside down from perches. In nesting pairs, they hang off the porch of nest boxes. They appear to hang too far over on their tiptoes with their wings spread open on the verge of taking off or falling over. Experts believe this is a protective or territorial stance for the bird to defend nests or other perches.

### Perch Pounding

Male cockatiels imitate woodpeckers by pounding on their perches to show off for prospective lady cockatiels or a favorite owner. Males also show off by hopping, then cocking their heads for appreciation. A male cockatiel that is besotted by a female will lean close to her and whistle loudly.

### Flakes In Feathers

Cockatiels molt their feathers twice a year, which can create dandruff-like flakes. During a period of about six weeks, a molting cockatiel loses all of its feathers. This starts with the head feathers and ends with the long tail feathers. The feathers do not fall out at once, so a cockatiel does not become bald during the molt.

You can see the new feathers coming in looking spiky, because new feathers come in encased in a clear keratin sheath. As the feather matures, the keratin flakes off — becoming what looks like dandruff. Cockatiels usually appreciate help preening these new feathers, but if you get too close to the sensitive base of the feather, they'll let you know with a squawk.