

## Helping Baby Parrotlets

### **Do all parrotlet parents hurt their babies?**

Q: Hi, I had trouble with my first clutch of babies and two of them were hurt by their parents and lost their toes and part of a leg. Have you heard of parrotlets doing this to their babies? All the answers I have gotten is that first time parents sometimes do this. Can you please give me advice on how to prevent this? Thanks.

Sandee Molenda explains:

This is a common situation with first-time parents. Fortunately, they usually get it right with the second clutch, especially if they are Pacifics. Experience and instinct are what guides parenting skills. So long as they are receiving adequate nutrition, have the appropriate sized cage and nestbox and have privacy they should do better the second time around. Privacy is very important and the birds should not be disturbed except while being fed and cleaned. Observing them, even from a distance, is a mistake many novice breeders make and one of the biggest causes of improper parenting including aggression. After all, these are prey animals that react on instinct for protection first and foremost.

Disturbances of nesting areas will often cause them to abandon or harm their chicks. I also do not recommend banding the chicks and returning them to the nest. While many breeders report having no problems doing this, my 25+ years experience has proven that it is a risk that is unnecessary and often results in maiming of the chicks, particularly the legs and toes. Since most people pull chicks for handfeeding at 10-14 days when they can easily be banded, there is no reason to band and stick them back in the nest. If everything is in order, they will hopefully get it right the next time around, although there are no guarantees. We are dealing with animals that are unpredictable with their behavior and sometimes the hardest thing about breeding birds is to have patience and do nothing other than letting nature take its course. Hopefully, your birds will do better the second time around.