

## Clean Up Your Bird's Air

**Find out how to lessen the debris in your bird's air**

*By Rebecca Sweat*

An air filtration system can help lessen the amount of debris in your bird's air. Courtesy Rachel Lipovec, Ohio

Bird debris in the air is another issue. As long as you have birds in your house, this is not something you can completely eliminate. You can, however, lessen the amount of dander, powder, feather dust, dried fecal particles, etc. in the air by installing an air filtration system and a humidifier.

"Buy a filter that actually traps the toxins in the air and purifies the air, rather than just stir up the dust," advised Ken Welle, DVM, an avian veterinarian in Urbana, Illinois. He recommends a HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) filter with carbon filtration. HEPA filters mechanically remove bird dust and other organic particles in the air. Carbon filters remove toxic chemicals from the air. Be sure to choose an air filtration system that does not produce ozone. Ozone is harmful to a bird's respiratory tract.

If you live in a dry climate or your home is dry from running the heater during winter, consider buying a humidifier as well. "Humidity helps remove particles from the air," said Richard Nye, DVM, a veterinarian in Westchester, Illinois, with a special interest in birds. "As moisture content in the air goes up, it surrounds the particles floating around in the air and this causes the particles to settle, and they can then be vacuumed up more easily."

There are other steps you can take as well. Open your home's windows during the spring and summer months for aircirculation and ventilation, and use a window box fan to draw fresh air into your house.

Daily cage cleaning also helps. "Obviously bird droppings are not going to have a chance to dry out and become airborne if you are removing the dirty cage papers on a daily basis," Nye said. If you are asthmatic or are prone to allergies, wear a mask when cleaning out your bird's cage.

Do you have more birds than your home can reasonably handle? If you have 100 cockatiels and live in a 1,200-square foot home, you're going to have an awful lot of bird dust in a relatively small airspace, and there's no air filter on the market that can adequately clean that. There's no set rule regarding the maximum number of birds you should have for your size house, but as a general guideline, if you can see feathers and lots of dust floating around in your air, the volume of airspace inside your house is probably not enough for the number of birds you're keeping.