

## Entertain Bored Budgies

**Seasonal changes, changes in your budgies' environment or illness can all cause a less enthusiastic demeanor.**

*By Diane Grindol*

**Q:** My budgies (parakeets) are extremely healthy, and I do a quick hands-on and -off examination of them, their droppings and their cage every day. My two young males recently stopped playing with their toys. I bought safe, toys with bells and other things they used to love, and I tried moving the toys and perches daily.

Courtesy Hannah Fenton, Ontario, Canada

If your bird has lost its liveliness regularly observe your bird's behavior and record down any changes.

I have had my budgies for two and a half years. They have all the signs of young, healthy birds, but all they want to do now is sit around, chirp and chew on things. They don't even chew hard enough to consider it playing. Why have my once lively, fun birds lost all enthusiasm?

**A:** Observing small changes in our pet birds provides clues to their health and happiness. As prey animals, birds are meant to travel in flocks. They naturally do not show signs of illness or discomfort, because a predator could pick them out if they look different from the rest of the flock.

The change in your budgies' behavior could indicate that their health is compromised, or it might be a seasonal change. A change in their environment could have provoked it, too. Take your birds to an avian veterinarian for a well-bird checkup to determine if there is an issue with parasites or a bacterial or fungal infection that could make a bird feel like sitting instead of playing. None of these things are obvious from a bird's appearance, which is why avian veterinarians perform lab tests to check for them. If your budgies are physically fine, then move on to behavioral issues.

When cockatiels and budgies are in a breeding mode, they exhibit special chirps and chewing. It usually occurs in the spring and fall when a budgie is most stimulated to breed because the number of natural daylight hours is at a peak. A budgie can breed anytime, so frequent baths, lots of attention and petting or long hours awake stimulate it to breed.

If this is the case, make sure that your birds do not have access to dark places to nest. Move or change their cage so it becomes an unstable environment for breeding. For at least a couple weeks, give them only 10 to 12 hours of daylight to shut off the breeding hormone cycle.

### Record Changes Over Time

Look at the budgies' environment to check if anything has changed to make them fearful. Fans, pictures or a clock hung above a cage can scare a bird. New noises in the environment, such as a neighbor building a garage or you painting the hallway, are other scary changes.

Take time to record changes on your calendar or in a notebook. Perhaps you will discover that this is a seasonal behavior, or you will determine that it is not.

You took some of the next steps by assuming your budgies are bored; you tried changing their toys and perches. Show interest in your budgies' toys by playing with them yourself, exclaiming over them and making playing with toys a social occasion. Budgies are social and will want to do what their flock is doing.

Offer your budgies food to play with such as seeded grasses from edible flowers like pansies and nasturtiums, corn on the cob, broccoli flowerets to pick apart, thawed frozen peas, even toasted oat cereal threaded on a string. For a change, try some warm foods like oatmeal, cooked pasta, brown rice or a slice of sweet potato briefly cooked in the microwave. [Remember to remove uneaten warm foods after your birds have their fill to avoid the growth of harmful bacteria.]

There is no one right answer to your questions. Over time and through continued observation, you can figure out what is going on with your budgies.