

## Keep Your Pet Bird's Air Toxin-Free

**Follow these tips to keep your pet bird safe from toxins in the air.**

*By Rebecca Sweat*

By Gina Cioli/Bowtie Studio/Courtesy Omar's Exotic Birds

Keep your bird's health in mind and take precautions to make sure that household items are pet bird-friendly.

Whether it's you or your pet bird gasping for air, any kind of acute or chronic respiratory distress is a serious situation. But as scary as these kinds of scenarios can be, all of the problems with airborne toxicities mentioned in this article are totally avoidable. You just need to take some common sense steps to keep your air clean.

- 1) Avoid using roach, ant or flea sprays in the room where your pet bird's cage is located. Learn to appreciate the smell of fresh air from an open window rather than using scented candles or air deodorizers.
- 2) If you must use aerosols, air fresheners, strongly scented candles, ammonia- or chlorine-based cleaning products, use them as far away from the pet birds as possible, or temporarily take the pet birds to a neighbor's house if there is any doubt. If you have cleaned your pet bird's room with a strong cleanser, open the window to the room before returning your pet bird to its cage so the area can be well ventilated and free of residual chemicals.
- 3) Before you have the interior of your house painted or fumigated, new carpet installed or use the self-cleaning oven feature on your range, take your bird to a friend's or neighbor's house and leave the bird there for 24 hours — or until all of the odor is gone.
- 4) Install a carbon monoxide detector. This is especially important if you use any kind of space heaters or indoor grills in your house or have an older furnace or fireplace.
- 5) If you smoke and can't give it up, then at least don't do it around your pet birds. Go outside to smoke, or designate a "smoking room" inside your house that is closed off from the rest of your house and is away from your pet bird.
- 6) If your pet bird's cage is located in the kitchen or breakfast nook, exercise extreme caution whenever any cooking or cleaning is being done. "Be sure your cooking area is well ventilated to the outside; not inside, where the fumes could reach your pet birds," suggested Larry Nemetz, DVM, a birds-only veterinarian in Southern California. If you have a tendency to forget about what's cooking on the stove and let pans burn, get a kitchen timer and get rid of your nonstick cookware.
- 7) If you let your pet bird shower with you in the morning, put it back in its cage and away from the bathroom — before you start polishing your nails, putting on perfume or aftershave, or spraying hair spray or deodorant. "Don't assume that if you can tolerate a particular fume, that your bird can too — because it probably can't," said Washington state avian veterinarian Cathy Johnson-Delaney, DVM.