

Cage-Cleaning & Painting Tips For Pet Bird Owners

Follow these tips to clean the heavy dirt and grime on your bird's cage, and find out how to repaint a bird cage.

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Q: I need to buy a new birdcage for my lovebirds because the metal grate at the bottom of their current one has become rusty. I really like the cage dimensions, and I would consider replacing it with the same model cage. If I were to buy the same cage, is it possible to powder coat the metal grate myself? Where would I buy the paint?

A: Unless you are in the business, it is highly unlikely that you could powdercoat cage components yourself. Simply explained, powdercoating is a step in the manufacturing process whereby electrostatically charged paint particles are sprayed onto grounded metal cage parts. The particles are electrostatically held to the metal. The parts are then heated to melt the powder into a paint-like substance and cure the finish.

Some bird cage companies will provide you with a small bottle of touch-up paint for nicks and scratches, but this would be insufficient for a badly corroded bottom grating.

Sometimes what we think of as "rust" is actually just a coating or grime. Clean the cage grating thoroughly so you can evaluate it properly. Follow these cage-cleaning tips:

Wash The Bird Cage Grating

1) Use a power washer, hose, hot shower, steam cleaner, dishwasher or other effective means. I put small cage gratings in the dishwasher (don't tell the dinner guests!) and am always amazed at how well they turn out. Painted parts may not hold up well in the dishwasher, but metal-tone gratings usually come out sparkling.

2) Use a steel wool soap pad or wire brush to scour a metal-finish cage grating. Use a nylon brush or scouring pad on painted cage parts.

3) Rinse well, and permit the grating to air dry overnight, then inspect for residual dirt and repeat the above steps if necessary.

Painting Bird Cages

If you elect to repaint cage parts, choose a "nursery-safe-when-dry" paint intended for use on metal. Read label instructions prior to use. Call the 800 number on the paint can for further advice. Never apply paint near your bird. Wait for nice weather, and paint in a well-ventilated garage or outdoors. Be sure fumes do not permeate your bird's living area. Although the paint label may state non-toxic-when-dry, such paints are usually harmful if inhaled. Remember that "non-toxic" applies to humans. Paint products are not routinely tested on birds, so manufacturers cannot guarantee their safety for avian use. Permit the paint to dry for at least 48 hours before moving your bird into the cage. Don't allow your bird to eat paint chips or any other non-food product. I do not paint cage bars, as I've found that a good cleaning is usually sufficient to get them back in shape.

Now I'm going to tell you the big secret: Many major cage manufacturers offer replacement cage parts! That's right ... you can often purchase replacement dishes, gratings and even cage trays! You don't usually see these on pet shop shelves because of space limitations and because many distributors do not carry a full supply of replacement parts. They must often be ordered directly from the manufacturer, and this takes additional effort and time. If you know the brand and model number of your bird's cage, ask your pet shop professional to order you a new grating. When purchasing a new cage, order a replacement grating for future needs!

Finally, when replacing your cage, consider buying one with a stainless-steel grating. Stainless steel doesn't rust, and it can be easily cleaned with steel wool pads.