

How To Wash And Disinfect Parrot Water Bottles & Crocks

Regularly clean and sanitize your bird's water containers to keep its water fresh.

By Rebecca Sweat

Clean and sanitize your bird's water bowls and crocks once a week. Courtesy Claire Risica, Nevada

There's no question that pet birds need a regular supply of clean water. But even the purest water in the world will be bad for your birds if you allow the water containers to become dirty or contaminated.

Veterinarians generally recommend water bowls and crocks be washed with warm, soapy water on a daily basis — normally when you change the water. Scour the corners, nooks and crannies of the water dish using a small scrub brush, kitchen scratch pad made for pots and pans or an old toothbrush (that has been disinfected first with bleach to get out the “people germs”).

In addition, once a week put the water bowls and crocks in the dishwasher to sanitize them with hot water. (Be sure to first wash the bird bowls in the sink with soap and water to get off the slime and crud, and then put the bowls in the dishwasher with the dishes you eat off of.)

Likewise, water bottles should also be washed every day — when you change the water. Use a bottle brush to run down through the drinking tube and inside the bottle with warm, soapy water. You might want to use a double-brush that has a regular-sized bottle brush on one end and a smaller, tube-sized brush on the other end. You can also use pipe cleaners to clean inside the tube.

“It's important that you clean out the water bottle real well to make sure it's not slick or slimy inside,” said Florida veterinarian Gregory Harrison, DVM. “If you can feel slime, that's bacterial build-up, and you need to make sure you get all that out.”

Once a week completely take apart the water bottle and put all the parts — tube, bottle, stopper — in the dishwasher to disinfect them with hot water.

For the average pet owner, no stronger disinfecting is needed than to run water bowls and bottles through the dishwasher. However, if you've got a boarding facility, pet store, bird rescue or veterinary clinic where you're constantly bringing in new animals (and potentially new viruses and bacteria) or if you've got an open aviary with a lot of birds coming and going, then you may want to disinfect the water containers weekly with bleach or a Quaternary ammonia compound.

Follow the directions on the label of the disinfectant, so that you dilute it properly.

“People tend to make the solution too strong and then practically kill themselves and their birds if they're in the vicinity with the fumes,” noted Missouri veterinarian Julie Burge, DVM.

Rinse water containers thoroughly after you've disinfected them. “You don't want your birds taking in or drinking the noxious, toxic chlorine gas from the heavy duty chlorine cleaner,” Burge said.