

## Clean House, Healthy Bird

### Poor housekeeping could jeopardize your bird's health & safety

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Photo Courtesy Susie Christian, California

Cleaning may take time, but it is an investment in your bird's health and safety.

In "Bad For You, Bad For Them" (July 2008 issue of BIRD TALK magazine) you learned some tips on how to protect your bird from your own bad habits. Now check out more ways your housekeeping habits can affect your bird.

Birds can learn many tricks, but none has yet mastered the art of housekeeping. Your bird depends on you to make sure its cage, its contents and the surrounding area is kept clean.

If you're juggling long work hours with other responsibilities, your household duties might be neglected. If this is spilling over to pet areas, you could be jeopardizing your bird's health and safety. A dirty bird cage, like a dirty home, can be a health hazard. Eating, drinking and living in contaminated quarters can cause disease. Also, by not checking your bird's living quarters regularly, you might be missing other potential dangers, such as broken toys and shredded perches.

Regular cleaning allows you to check the bird cage and its contents up close. Are any toys getting worn, frayed, torn, or otherwise dangerous? Is the bird cage itself in good condition, including the bars, hinges and latches? What about the perches? Are they chewed up or caked in droppings?

Likewise, when you're changing the lining material regularly, you become familiar with your bird's normal droppings, both quantity and appearance. Frequent cleaning lets you catch any change early, which can be even be lifesaving.

#### Embrace Your Cleaning Responsibilities

Even if you get in the habit of daily maintenance it can be easy to put off in-depth cleanings. Depending on the type and number of birds you own, the bird cage and area will need a deep cleaning anywhere from weekly to monthly. The longer you delay it, the more time it will take when you are finally forced to take action by the mess. Worse yet, delays can mean risking your bird's health by forcing it to live in an unsanitary environment.

Ward off avoidance by making an appointment with yourself for bird cage cleaning. Schedule it on your calendar just as you would book any other important commitment, and give it the same level of priority.

Allow plenty of time to remove everything from the bird cage and to inspect and scrub each item as well as the cage itself. You can streamline the process by doing the washing in the shower or outside with a hose. Steam cleaners are also suitable for easy, disinfectant-free bird cage cleaning.

If you have other family members in your household, you might not have to take on all of these duties yourself. If your partner is willing or your children are old enough, delegate some of the work. Besides freeing up some of your time, requiring youngsters to care for a pet teaches important lessons in responsibility. But this doesn't get you off the hook; you'll still have to follow up to ensure that your helpers are not shirking their duties and, especially in regard to children, that clean up is done in a safe manner. If you're spending more time nagging than it takes to do the actual work, delegation might be counterproductive.

Cleaning is a chore, but it's also an investment in your bird's health and comfort. You might have to do some juggling to fit it in your busy schedule, but you'll get a big payoff in a happier, healthier pet.

#### Quick Tips To Clean As You Go

**Clean As You Go Tip 1** Rinse and put your dishes in the dishwasher as soon as you are done so you avoid taking on a huge pile up of dishes later on. Pick up clutter as you encounter it instead of putting it off for when you have time (which never seems to come). Keep two sets of dishes, so you'll always have a clean set for your bird (switch out the used dishes at the end of the day with the clean ones; run the dirty set in the dishwasher with your own dishes). Do a quick sweep of your bird's area at the end of the day and change its cage liner

**Clean As You Go Tip 2** Assign yourself a daily cleaning task, one that is manageable to you, such as doing a load of

laundry one day and cleaning the bathroom fixtures the next. Wipe down your bird's perches and give it a good scrub down the next.

Learn some ways to make practical lifestyle changes in "Bad For You, Bad For Them" of the July 2008 issue of BIRD TALK magazine.