

stress of transport and quarantine, even the well-bred European Gouldians arrived in somewhat delicate condition.

From a continent where the seasons are the reverse of ours, from the commerce of Japanese traders, and from European entrepreneurs, and travelling in boxes that held up to 100 birds for days – our captive Gouldians are fortunate to still be around. Remarkably, some of these birds lived to thrive and breed in U.S. cages and aviaries.

The beautiful color mutations of the Gouldian Finch came to the U.S. from the Western European breeders. While they may have originated elsewhere, the diligent breeders of Europe bred them and sold them to U.S. dealers and breeders. Importing the expensive mutations into the U.S. was a challenge, not only because of the expense of the birds, but also because of the quarantine regulations. Quarantine was expensive and a risk to the health of such an easily stressed bird since quarantine facilities often held thousands of birds at a time.

Gouldian Finches available in the U.S. today are primarily domestically bred. There are no wild-trapped birds, no Japanese imports, and very few European-bred Gouldians on the U.S. market today. This is an admirable accomplishment for the dedicated Gouldian breeders in America – past and present. Very few finches in aviculture have become so well established as is the Gouldian today.

Whether it was the quest for commercial gain or the real love of the bird itself that resulted in its entry into avicultural history, the bird that Australia now strives to preserve in the wild shows few signs of impending extinction in aviculture. ➤

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Veterinary Viewpoints

Edited by Amy Worell, DVM, ABVP
Woodland Hills, CA

Question #1: Through the years, I have been to several different avian veterinarians. Each vet recommends different tests for my birds. I appreciate that there are different reasons for doing these tests, but I really can't figure out which tests I should do each year on my birds. I have three pet birds, which I dearly love. Since there are several vets that answer these questions, I thought I would ask and hear what each of you has to say. So, My question is what tests would I do on my birds each year and why?

T. Study, Virginia

Answer #1: If your birds appear healthy and you feel that they are stable and a complete physical examination and careful history do not reveal any problems, I would, as a minimum, recommend a yearly gram stain of the upper respiratory tract and of the lower digestive tract, and every other

year a complete blood count. Needless to say, if there were any abnormality found I would go further with testing and evaluation.

James M. Harris, DVM
Oakland, CA

Answer #2: I am going to assume that these are routine checkup requests. If so, the tests recommended might vary with the history. For example, if one of your pets is a macaw (or other high risk species) acquired within the last two years, in our area we might recommend screening tests for signs of proventricular dilatation disease (PDD), especially since you have two other birds at risk. Yearly weights, droppings evaluation, test feedings (a seed meal instead of pellets), radiographs, blood tests for white count, albumin, and lipase/amylase are used at our facility. Crop biopsies are used if any results are suspicious. Another factor important in established pets is

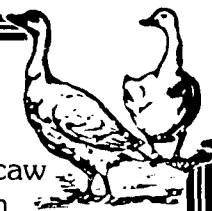
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* Position open: contact regional vice president if interested.

** indicates 2 year term has been fulfilled. If no new interested party comes forward and indicates a desire to serve, incumbent remains in position.

For information about contacting any of these member clubs, please call that club's state coordinator.

contact with other parrots. When the owner is on holiday, if the pets are boarded at any home or facility with other parrots, then a higher level of care and testing is required to assume safety. Once a pet has been in a home for at least two years, and no longer has contact with any other pet birds, we would probably restrict our investigations to an annual discussion of care and behavior, a recorded weight, and a physical examination.

Louise Bauck, DVM
Canada

Answer #3: Every veterinary practitioner has a different approach when it comes to testing. This decision is best left within the context of the veterinary/client relationship since each situation is unique and different.

However, you requested individual philosophies on yearly testing. Consider this, if each of us went to our own personal physician for routine checkups and baseline bloodwork each year, then many disease processes could be detected in the early stages and be treated or prevented. Logically, the same would hold true for your pets. In my opinion, as long as the birds are in a stable household with low stress, on a good diet, receive proper attention and play, and, very importantly, are not exposed to "new" or "foreign" birds, then a yearly check-up including physical examination and weighing with perhaps baseline bloodwork may be all that is warranted. If the birds are tested for infectious agents as they enter the household and proper quarantine protocols are followed, then repeat testing for infectious agents, including culture may not be necessary.

Again, such decisions are best left between client and his or her veterinarian. However, one can never be completely assured that even when a yearly testing regimen is followed, that such action will prevent any problems in the interim. Owners have the responsibility for monitoring their pets' health and being able to recognize when medical intervention is needed.

Darrel Styles, DVM
Dripping Springs, Texas

Answer #4: There are probably as many different approaches as to which diagnostic tests should be performed on an annual or new bird basis as there are veterinarians practicing avian medicine. It is therefore a good idea to find an avian practitioner with whom you are comfortable, listen to his or her recommendations, ask questions, and also educate yourself on the side. There are numerous sources for information these days including multiple excellent websites, pet-care type forums, and local and regional educational meetings. Once you have established a relationship with an avian veterinarian, consider following his or her recommendations.

Presently, in my clinic, we recommend that pet birds have an annual physical examination with a number of diagnostic tests. The diagnostic tests that we recommend are a fecal parasite examination, an avian total body function test which is basically a CBC (complete blood count) with serum chemistries, a protein electrophoresis, and one of two different tests for psittacosis (assuming the pet bird is a psittacine).

My reasons for this series of tests are to identify underlying disease before it becomes a clinically apparent entity. I am a strong believer in preventive medicine, a large part of which is achieved with proper diet. As many exotics, including birds, hide signs of disease, these diagnostic tests offer a window as to what is occurring inside the individual. My hope is to identify underlying problems early, so that the pet can achieve its maximum potential lifespan in captivity. Many of the diagnostic tests we perform on our patients are within normal limits. Some of the diagnostic tests suggest or identify underlying problems. I like to view diagnostic tests as diagnostic aids, in that they may aid us in making a diagnosis. Wouldn't *you* prefer to know that you had an underlying problem that is not yet clinically apparent so that it could be addressed before it becomes apparent?

Amy B. Worell, DVM, ABVP-Avian
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James F. Gaines, DVM, Chantilly, VA

Question #2: I have a six-year old daughter who wants a bird. We have in the past had a lot of birds, from Hyacinth Macaws to African Greys, both that we bred and kept as pets. We have only an African Grey now as a pet, but I don't let my daughter touch her as I think the bird would bite. We went to a local pet store, purchased a Cockatiel for our daughter, the bird became very scared once at home, and bit our daughter. The bird was then taken back to the pet store and they are going to work with it some more. I am thinking though, that this is not the bird for my daughter. What birds would you suggest for a young girl? She loves our friend's Amazon, but she says it is too heavy for her to hold. Thanks in advance for your help.

N. Stickland, Minnesota

Answer #1: Sorry to hear that your daughter had a bad experience with the Cockatiel. I would still suggest a well dispositioned just weaned Cockatiel that was handfed and imprinted on people as a good choice. Another bird to consider for your daughter would be a Budgie with a similar background. A Ring-necked Dove would also be a possible choice.

James M. Harris, DVM

Oakland, CA

Answer #2: I am sure that most of the Cockatiel owners will be quick to say that this bad experience with the Cockatiel was really an isolated incident. Perhaps the bird was represented as handfed but was really not. Or possibly it was not well socialized after arriving at the store. Or it is possible that you happened to pick a high strung individual. Most Cockatiels are very gentle when properly handled. However, other, more mellow, birds might include Senegal Parrots or various *Pionus* species. A hand-raised Peach-faced Lovebird is also an excellent child's pet if it will be handled frequently.

Louise Bauck, DVM

Canada

Answer #3: Birds bite, it's a fact. You cannot change the nature of the bird but you can minimize damage by selecting the proper pet for the proper age owner. For younger children, pet doves are gentle and docile pets. The only damage they can generally do is scratch if the nails are too long. For an older child, nothing beats a young Budgie. Budgies may bite but it is rarely serious. Getting the child a young Budgie will teach him or her the responsibility of pet ownership and pet stewardship. Both Budgie and child can teach each other their own limits to handling and patience.

For a bit more money, a *Pyrrhura* conure such as a Green-cheeked or Maroon-bellied conure makes a good first pet. The same is true of the *Poicephalus* such as Senegal Parrots.

The important factor is to start with a young bird and preferably a handfed one since it will be better socialized for pet purposes. Always buy from a reputable breeder or pet store. And, before any bird is introduced into the household, have it vet-checked and follow quarantine procedures if other pet birds already live in the home.

Darrel Styles, DVM

Dripping Springs, TX

Answer #4: My suggestions for a pet bird for a young child would include a Cockatiel and an Umbrella Cockatoo. I find that both of these birds are among the best all around family birds. These two bird species, of course have the ability to bite, but often are less likely to bite, when considered as a group. Any bird that is selected should be handfed and accustomed to being handled. A young child may need to be instructed on how to handle birds, including such points as moving slowly, petting the bird gently, and not pulling at its body parts. As your daughter felt that the Amazon was too heavy for her to hold, I would suggest that you find her another loving Cockatiel as a pet. Best wishes.

Amy T. Woodell, DVM, ABVP-Avian

West Hills, CA

Louise Bauck, DVM

Dr. Bauck completed a postgraduate degree and residency in exotic pet medicine after completing her DVM at the University of Saskatchewan. She currently works as the Director of Veterinary Services for the Hagen Avicultural Research Institute. Dr. Bauck is on the review board for two international veterinary journals and has authored chapters in all three current major avian texts. She has also written the new AAHA manual on avian medicine, and has authored the avian chapter in the current Merck manual. She is a consultant for the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council in both the US and Canada. A frequent lecturer to both the pet industry and to the veterinary community, her current research interest is in diseases of the Lady Gouldian Finch.

James M. Harris, DVM


Dr. Harris, who is originally from England, started keeping birds at the early age of four. Dr. Harris is a graduate of the Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine. He started the Montclair Veterinary Clinic and Hospital in 1961, which is located in Oakland, California. He breeds macaws and finches, and is well known in the veterinary community for his interest and endeavors with the human-animal bond. Dr. Harris is the father of four children and the proud grandfather of four grandchildren.

Darrel K. Styles, DVM

Dr. Styles is a research veterinarian who has worked within the avicultural community for the past 10 years. He earned his DVM at North Carolina State University. His studies have taken him to work with noted research veterinarians and bird collection throughout the country. His work experience includes such facilities as Avicultural Institute and Pet Farm, Inc., as well as the Avian and Exotic Bird Medicine Department at NC State University. He is currently an owner of Hill Country Aviaries in Dripping Springs, Texas. Dr. Styles is also attending classes at the University of Texas where he is working on his Masters Degree in Medicinal Chemistry.

Amy B. Worell, DVM, ABVP-Avian

Dr. Worell has a BS in Zoology from the University of Kentucky and a DVM from Auburn University. She is a diplomat of the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners, where she was among the first group of veterinarians to be certified as an avian specialist. She is the owner of All Pets Medical Centre, in West Hills, California. Dr. Worell is an avid aviculturist, raising cockatoos, pionus, Greys and Eclectus Parrots. In the past, Dr. Worell was the AFA State Coordinator Chairman and chairman of the AFA veterinary program.

She served as the Association of Avian Veterinarians Chairperson for both the research and client education committees for several years, as well as being on the board of directors. She is on the editorial staff of several major avian and exotic veterinary publications as well as a contributor to major avian textbooks. She is known internationally for her research on hemachromatosis in toucans. 

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Book Review

by Rae V. Anderson
Sierra Madre, CA

HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD

Principal Editors: Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliot, and Jordi Sargatal, LYNX EDICIONS, \$185 per volume. (Note: the 5th volume alone, or all five of the available volumes purchased at once, can be gotten at a prepublication price of \$145 each if ordered by 31 July 1999.)

Through my approximately 68 years of aviculture I have never found a "Birds Of The World" type of book or series with which I was even partially satisfied. Such titles have always been far from complete, relating in generalities only to orders and families and quite cursorily at that. There has been little or no data on most of the particular species in which I have been interested and

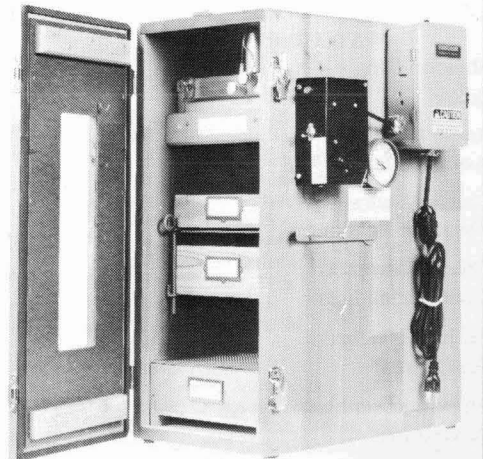
precious little even at genera level.

To be sure, species which are particularly spectacular in plumage colors and/or form or which have strange or unusual (from the human perspective) habits are usually illustrated and discussed but most often in ultra elementary and incomplete style. My library is quite void of such titles and I normally do not give them more than a brief first glance. Such was my speculation of the *HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD* until Volume 3 was published and American wildlife artist Albert Earl Gilbert convinced me that it would be worth my time to look over those first volumes in some detail. The more I looked and read, the greater my surprise at the comprehensiveness and quality of the text and illustrations as well as its very fine organization.

HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD, edited by Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott, and Jordi

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