

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sheldon,

Living on the wrong side of the Atlantic means that I get my *AFA Watchbird* some weeks late. But I wanted to comment on the very interesting article by Linda Roberts on "Birds with handicaps." What struck me about it was the large proportion of problems she listed that we would nearly always associate with inadequate calcium in the diet. While splayed legs, deformed feet, deformed beaks, balance problems, poor perching, poor flying, seizures and fits can have other causes it is our firm opinion that most of these have calcium deficiency at their root.

Combine this with research presented to the recent AAV conference in Tenerife which suggests that the "normal" blood calcium levels used by vets have probably been understated (something that we at The Birdcare Company have been saying for years) and the research from Dr. Laurie Hess in New York (reported in *Hanover* in 1997) that 98% of pet birds were getting less than the recommended levels of calcium in their diet and it makes great sense to me that we should see lots of calcium problems in our charges. When we analyze the data from our BirdvetOnline service we estimate that about 70% of the birds are showing signs of calcium deficiency.

Clearly many of these problems are irreversible. The deformed bones involved in splayed legs and rickets will not be corrected (unless caught very young or drastic surgery is attempted). But where the problems result from current nerve and muscle failure, complete recovery is often possible. Fits and seizures, "clenched fists," poor co-ordination, falling off perches etc., respond very well to appropriate supplementation.

Our product CalciBoost provides highly bio-available calcium that is easily administered in the food or water depending on the main components of

the diet. Ideally it is given routinely all year round but it can be given in much larger quantities to symptomatic birds.

We were the first to launch a liquid calcium supplement in the UK market and, nine years later, virtually all powdered supplements have disappeared over here. Pellets, which are forced to use solid calcium sources, have not filled the gap. Of course many of the birds in the Hess survey (about 50%) were being fed pellets. The liquid calcium technology works! Indeed it is a far more natural approach than the use of grit, calcium carbonate, and cuttle bone.

This revolutionary product is readily available in the USA from www.Birds2Grow.com (tel: 209-845-088) or over fifty retailers around the country.

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Malcolm Green
Director
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