

Opinions

To Wean or Not to Wean...

It never fails, every time there is a bird mart or an exhibit at a local bird show, someone complains that unweaned baby birds should not be sold. No one bothers to qualify their statements as to why or to whom they should not be sold, and so the heated arguments continued.

Unweaned baby parrots have been shipped all over the world, and with little problems associated with the age of the birds. Responsible breeders should not ship unweaned birds on flights that would cause them to miss their next feeding. It seems perfectly fine to ship them on counter to counter, short flights as long as they arrive in time for dinner. The stress suffered by an unweaned bird is far less than that of a newly weaned or adult bird.

The specialty bird store of today wants to hand-feed the chicks themselves. This helps to sell the product and brings the customer closer to the pet store, building a rapport between con-

sumer and retail outlet. The result is a sweeter baby bird that already knows the people it will live with. I see nothing wrong with this. Pet stores are not the dirty dungeons of the past, at least not the ones that I have been in lately. Many of these stores employ loving people with knowledge of hand-feeding, nutrition, and illnesses associated with baby birds. They are fast becoming experts in the field.

Many arguments for selling only weaned birds have originated due to a problem in the past. Someone sold an unweaned bird to an inexperienced hand-feeder and the baby died or got very sick. This situation occurred because the breeder sold the baby to an inexperienced consumer, leaving out the middle man (the pet store). It should only happen once before everyone learns that not just anyone can hand-rear parrots. This is a science and has been studied for many years. If a breeder decides to sell an unweaned bird to a consumer,

one who swears they know how to hand-feed, then the burden of fault should rest on that breeder. For all of us, as aviculturists, to set a rule that no unweaned birds should ever be sold is absurd. Perhaps a rule that warns discretion would make more sense. Experienced pet stores have every right to purchase unweaned birds for their store. It saves them money and saves the breeder some time, something which they all could use.

A breeder can sell a baby bird to a consumer for almost twice what they can get from a pet store. This fact I will not argue with. However, selling babies to the public does not release your responsibility to that animal. It is actually not wise to sell directly to the public. This makes the prices of birds in the pet store appear inflated and out of line. As a breeder, are you willing to spend the time and effort required to educate the consumer about their purchase? Are you willing to answer the late night phone calls of panic over nothing? Can you offer the consumer the equipment and supplies they need to care for that particular sale? The pet store is a blessing in disguise. Find one that works well with you and you will cut your work load in half.

In addition to the responsibility of the pet store, they are licensed to sell to the public. If a breeder sells directly to the consumer they are supposed to collect state sales tax and prepare sales tax reports. If anyone catches you selling to the public and not filing this report, you could be in serious trouble at tax time. In most states, selling wholesale to the pet store relieves your responsibility to file this report. The government has taken a new look at bird breeding as a hobby and a business. They are aware of who raises birds and where they sell them. Some states have gone as far as to watch the ads in the local newspaper to see who is selling to the public. It is a simple matter of a phone call from there and someone may go to jail. If you want to sell to the public...open a pet store. ➔

Sincerely, Rick Jordan
Kutztown, PA

Opinions OOPS!

Dear Sir: In his letter in the May/June issue, Mr. Hudson stated that President Clinton signed the WBCA into law. Actually, President Bush did it. Sincerely, Lee Phillips, Harwood, MD

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a member of the

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