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the Vet's Corner

by Kendal P. Svedeen, D.V.M.
Mission Viejo, California

Q. I have heard a wide variety of ways to clip birds' wings, and would like to know what the "Bird Doctor" thinks is the best method.

A. It depends upon what you are trying to accomplish. For a new bird, the purpose of trimming the wings is to simplify the training process. Many pet shop proprietors clip one wing and not the other. I do not believe in this method because I have repaired too many injuries caused by it. The bird will take off, thinking it is going in one direction, but it goes in a different one, frequently resulting in a "crash-landing" that could inflict a variety of injuries. The wings should be trimmed equally on both sides. In order to maintain the most natural appearance in the perched position, I prefer to leave the first two primaries intact, and clip the next ten or twelve feathers about 1/4 to 1/2 inch shorter than the secondary "coverlet" feathers. It is a little more time consuming than the common "chop" job, but it will pay off in the long run, because your birds will look better, and be much less apt to injure themselves during the training process. In most species this method will limit their flight capabilities to level flight. The exceptions are cockatiels, conures, and cockatoos, which can fly quite well with this kind of trim, but they will only be able to fly short distances. Trim four or five additional feathers in these species to limit their activities to level flight. Another method subscribed to by professional bird trainers is to pull the first five or six primary flight feathers. During the training process, the first thing the bird is taught is to fly to the owner on command. Within six to eight weeks the feathers are replaced, and the bird happily flies to its owner on command.

Q. How can I determine the quality of the seed I buy for my bird?

A. There are many excellent sources of seed for all species of birds across the country. The critical thing to evaluate is the quality and freshness of the product. There is a great deal of literature about formulations of seed for most species of birds. Seed suppliers are very aware of this data, and do their utmost to comply with the needs of the consumer. Get to know your pet shop owner, and don't

hesitate to discuss formulations with him. Insist upon fresh seed in sealed bags. Do not buy more seed than your bird will consume in a month's time. The seed should have a highly shiny shell, and should not have any webby material in it which causes seeds to stick together in clumps. Storage is important too. Keep the seed in a sealed container in the refrigerator to prevent moth and beetle infestation. A covered coffee can or Tupperware type of container is sufficient. Do not freeze seed, because it can destroy some of the essential vitamins and nutrients necessary for the health of your birds. ●

NOTICE

State of California
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has moved to a new address.

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Further information on methodology and documentation, pricing and discounts is available on request to CRS. Michael M. Multer, Ph.D., Director
WestChem Building 7079 Mission Gorge Road
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NOTICE

Ohio State University needs noisy finches and small parrots for continuing studies on bird vocalizations. They are interested in culls or birds not suitable for sale or show. Their funds are limited and they would appreciate any donations or inexpensive birds you might want to get rid of. Please contact:

Abbot S. Gaunt, Ph.D.
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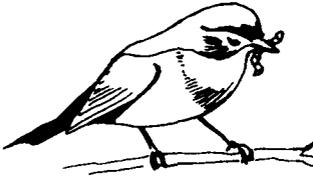
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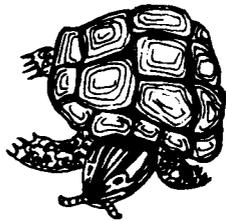
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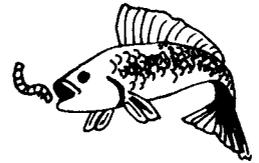
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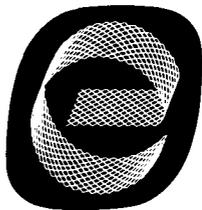
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