

NOTICE

All correspondence intended for the editor of the Watchbird should be mailed directly to his address.

Sheldon Dingle
P.O. Box 340
Norco, CA 91760

From The Editor's Desk

by Sheldon Dingle

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Lest the A.F.A. as an organization be put into occasional jeopardy, I wish to reiterate the fact that I, S.L. Dingle, your humble servant, am responsible for the material in this column. The views expressed herein are those of the participants and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the A.F.A. Because of tight deadline schedules and to expedite the handling of mail those of you who want to participate in this "Forum by Mail" should send your letters directly to me at P.O. Box 340, Norco, Ca., 91760. This will save time and expense.

And now, on to the bag of mail.

Dear Sir,

I am writing in reference to your letter in the Feb/Mar 82 issue of Watchbird.

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AUGUST 4 THRU 8, 1982

Mrs. Dunlap wrote to you telling of the death of her double yellow Amazon parrot.

I find your advice to be very poor. First is your advice to "learn all you can about your bird's health and rely upon the vets as little as possible." I have been treating birds daily for 5 years and I still see cases that are puzzling. How do you expect an individual with one pet bird to diagnose and treat their own bird. I do not believe that this is possible for the majority of bird owners. There are vets in every major city in this country who routinely treat birds and are very knowledgeable about them. If your advice to "rely upon the vets as little as possible" is followed we will soon be back to the times 10-20 years ago when very few veterinarians (in case you don't know) knew about or treated birds. I firmly believe that there is no one better qualified to diagnose and treat birds than veterinarians.

Second, I believe if Mrs. Dunlap had spent a little time looking for a veterinarian who specialized in birds, she would have had a much better chance of saving her bird. In many instances bird owners take their birds to their regular veterinarian asking or demanding that he treat the bird. The doctor is then obligated to perform this service. The veterinarian is not entirely without fault because he should recommend someone who works on birds routinely, if he himself does not.

I am sure that the present state of pet bird medicine would be very primitive at best without the contribution of veterinarians around the world. If this represents the thinking of the A.F.A. and Watchbird, I will find it very hard in the future to support your organization.

Sincerely, Jon F. Esposito, D.V.M.
El Paso, Texas

I certainly hope sir, that you understand avian medicine better than you understood my answer to Mrs. Dunlop. For your convenience I'll restate the three-paragraph answer in the most succinct terms.

Paragraph one. Three different vets took your money and failed to save your bird. Learn all you can about bird health. Paragraph two. There are some excellent bird vets in your area. Paragraph three. Learn other bird people's recommendations regarding parasite control and good veterinarians.

Now that you better understand what I said, I trust we are in better accord. I'm sure that even you, doctor, would never suggest that aviculturists should cultivate ignorance regarding their bird's health.

And we both agree that there are good bird vets who should be used at need. Of course, the better health care one provides for one's own birds (proper diet, housing, sanitation, freedom from stress, etc.) the less often veterinarian services are needed. It is an unhealthy and unnatural generation that depends routinely upon the drugs and knives of the healing practitioners — and that goes for animal care too.

The A.F.A. and good bird veterinarians have always worked hand in glove. Indeed, the A.F.A. and "Watchbird" have fostered and supported the advance of pet bird medicine. And many veterinarians have been exceedingly helpful to aviculture through the medium of the A.F.A. I am sure that this happy liaison will continue and I hope you're part of it.

Ed.

Dear Sheldon,

As president of the American Federation of Aviculture, I was distressed to read a recent comment of yours in Watchbird magazine in which you voiced your personal opinion on the integrity of the medical profession.

Statistics estimate that about ten percent of all medical people are incompetent or disreputable (and I imagine about the same could be said of all professions and trades). This is a far cry from your statement.

It is unfortunate that the bird owner who wrote you had the unhappy experience of consulting two apparently incompetent veterinarians in seeking treatment for her pet bird. It is true, too, that many vets lack knowledge and experience in the care of aviary birds. On the other hand, though, the AFA has long been a firm supporter of veterinary avian medicine. The annual vet seminars held in conjunction with the AFA conventions have always been among the most valuable programs—for laymen and veterinarians alike.

Whatever your personal bias may be, I am going on record here to affirm AFA's continued and dedicated support of veterinary avian medicine and the thousands of very fine doctors who practice it.

Tom Ireland, President
American Federation of Aviculture

Dear brother Sheldon,

When I read your remarks about medical and veterinary doctors I felt that you being the eldest were also the first of the family to go senile. I realize that as you sit smoking your pipe in your library pondering the esoterica of the universe

you often fail to keep abreast of the various Dingle family projects. As an update, you should know that we have built our own veterinary hospital and hired our own resident vet. . .

The Dingle family upholds and supports the close liaison between aviculture and veterinary medicine. I guess I'll have to shake your tree periodically to keep you in touch with reality.

Pat Dingle, Las Vegas, NV

Ab, Patrick, my dear brother, you know me well. I had forgotten the vet. hospital. But, please, it's not semilit. It's a disfunction I've had since birth. For the sake of family unity, I'll recant my advice and suggest every serious aviculturist establish his own vet. hospital at his earliest opportunity — or support his local bird vet. to the maximum!

Ed.

Dear Mr. Dingle:

In reading some of your letters to the Editor recently, I felt I had to comment on "birds from a breeder." As an avian practitioner, I see many amazons and macaws which are obviously smuggled. U.S. Customs tells me it takes a large shipment, complete with license plate numbers, to warrant their manpower. Otherwise, they send out the USDA Newcastle's people for VVND surveillance.

Current problems include: 1. Ignorance and greed of the consumer, who wants a good deal and "believes" the bird is from the seller's cousin's bird farm; 2. Increased import restrictions will undoubtedly increase smuggling, as we all know; 3. While no statistics are available for comparison, I feel more psittacosis comes from the smuggled birds (there are those who feel the opposite). There is definitely an increased risk of Newcastle's and its consequences. 4. The inevitable dry up of importable (by any means) birds.

In theory, buying from a breeder is the best policy. Captive bred birds tend to have less variety of diseases, adapt better to artificial diets, and generally are better suited as a pet or captive breeder. Problems existing from the breeder source include: 1. An undetermined, but very low number of larger psittacines currently being produced, not meeting the needs of the pet trade or aviculture. 2. Many times, imported birds are passed off as "raised in my aviary." 3. The endemic aviary disease (parasites, viruses, bacteria, psittacosis), which is not recognized or admitted to by the breeder, but often

becomes apparent shortly after the bird is sold. 4. The sometimes appalling lack of basic knowledge (variety of reasons) of the breeder.

I don't see any solution to smuggling, aside from removing economic incentives. It certainly won't come from the government (look at the track record of the Drug Enforcement Administration). The market for smuggled birds is strong.

The single most important solution for the breeders is education. The breeder must be willing to seek it out. We need to ferret-out the ever-present old-wives tales. We're seeing a tremendous increase in good literature and periodicals (such as the WATCHBIRD and others). Advances in basic husbandry and medicine are occurring regularly, but in many ways, we are years behind the poultry industry.

Sincerely, Alan M. Fudge, DVM
Sacramento, CA

Dear Sheldon,

It may be of interest to our readers to note that much of the irresponsible article from the August 14 *Washington Post* which you reprinted in the Feb./Mar. issue of the *Watchbird* was lifted bodily from the equally irresponsible "book" by Greta Nilson, "The Bird Business." Needless to say, we here in Washington did not let it go by without protest. Letters to the *Post* from Ralph Anderson and phone calls from Ruth Hanessian brought no response. A few days after publication, however, I did receive a letter from Mr. Kenneth Berlin of the Justice Department which I have enclosed. We were not the only victims of this stupid piece of "journalism."

Sincerely, Cliff Witt
Gaitherburg, Maryland

Dear Cliff:

Since speaking to you, I have looked more carefully at the Washington Post article of Friday, August 14 and I am quite appalled by its inaccuracy. There seems to be something innacurate in virtually every paragraph. Needless to say, I am particularly upset by the paragraph that includes AFA in the same context as a discussion of the illegal wildlife trade. I, of course, said nothing of that kind and have always clearly stated that AFA and its membership deserves great praise for their support of wildlife law enforcement programs.

Sincerely, Kenneth Berlin
Chief Wildlife & Marine
Resources Section
Land & Natural Resources Division •

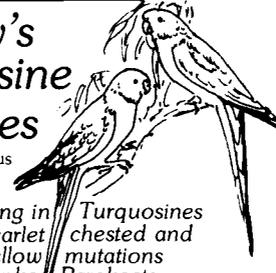
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