

the Vet's Corner

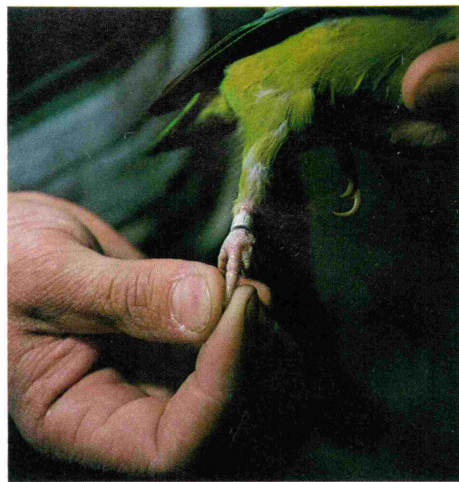
by Kendal P. Svedeen, D.V.M.
Mission Viejo, California

Leg Bands, Post Mortems, Bleeding Nails, and First Aid

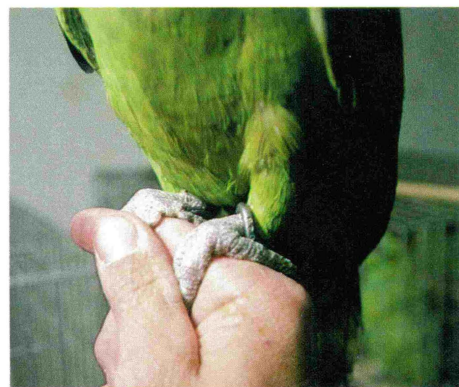
Q. Should we attempt to remove the leg bands from birds just released from quarantine, or leave them on for identification purposes?

A. Leg bands do accomplish a purpose. They indicate that the bird has most likely been through a legitimate quarantine, and is unlikely to have been smuggled. There are basically two types of leg bands

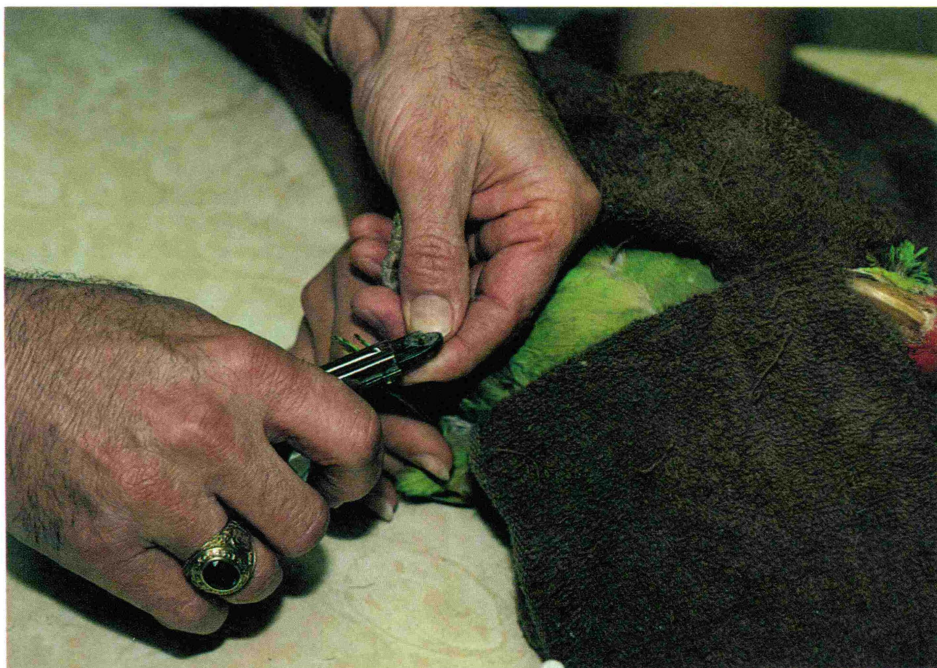
tested and approved by A.P.H.I.S. One is a plastic band that must be cut in order to be removed. The other is a heavy stainless steel band that can be bent or cut to be removed, but if it is bent, it could conceivably be transferred to an illegal bird. Both types of bands are code numbered and registered with the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture before the manufacturer can ship them to the quarantine station owner. Veterinarians can register and obtain these bands for purposes of identification, sex, and ownership. Personally, I prefer to tattoo birds. If I surgically sex them at the same time, the female is tattooed in the left wing-web, and the male in the right. The reason for this is that the male has a testicle on both sides, whereas the female's single ovary is located on the left side. I basically do not like leg bands because they can be responsible for a number of injuries to birds. I advise



This flat band is a type often used by breeders.



The round stainless steel band is put on before birds are released from U.S.D.A. approved quarantine stations.



When trimming toe nails, use the "guillotine" type on larger birds.

Use a slightly dampened cotton swab to apply a cauterizing powder if necessary.



clients with newly acquired birds to have the leg band removed, but to keep it for future reference if the need arises. Do not attempt to remove a band yourself unless you have the proper tools and know what you are doing.

Q. My local veterinarian and State Dept. of Agriculture have warned me never to freeze a bird's remains prior to post-mortem examination. It seems that to do so limits their ability to culture bacterial and viral organisms from tissues.

A. In many ways, their advice to you is absolutely correct, but in others, they are wrong. It is a matter of time. If you can transport the bird's cadaver to your State Lab or veterinarian within about three hours after death, that is the ideal diagnostic situation. If you cannot accomplish this within 24 hours, refrigerate the body as soon as possible after death. If the time factor is going to exceed 24 hours, freeze the body. The reason is that post-mortem autolysis, or degeneration of the tissues, occurs and renders an accurate diagnosis impossible. If fresh tissues are not submitted, cultures are useless. When refrigerated or frozen tissues are submitted, at least

some very significant and diagnostic histo-pathological determinations can be made.

Q. What do you advise using to arrest the bleeding of nails, feathers or skin?

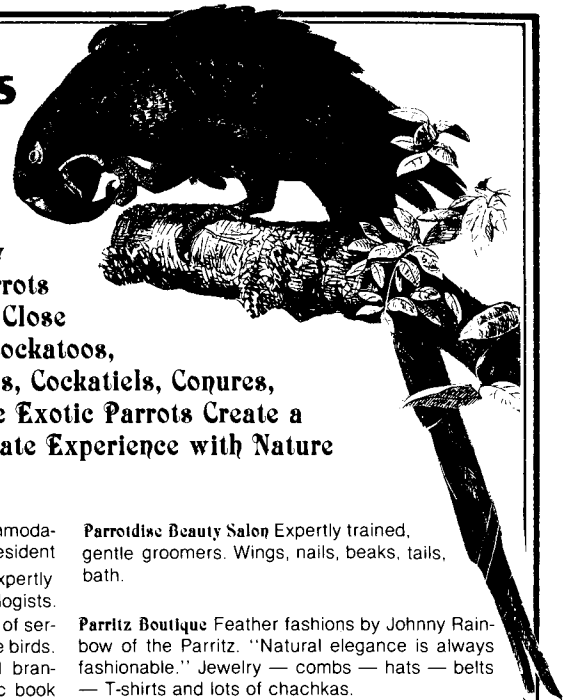
A. If you intend to trim your birds' nails, be sure that you have a good cauterizing agent available. Monzell's powder or solution (ferric subsulfate) can be obtained from most pharmacies without prescription. Compounds designed for the cauterizing of dog and cat toenails are also good, and are available at most pet shops. Household cures that may be used include styptic pencils, silver nitrate sticks, cornstarch, and flour. Ice packs can also be helpful. If in doubt, consult your veterinarian. When a problem arises with bleeding feather stumps, it invariably involves new feathers coming in during a molt. The only effective way I know of to stop it is to pull the feather by using forceps, tweezers, or pliers, getting a firm hold on the base of the quill, and pulling directly outwards.

Q. If one of our birds shows signs of illness, what should we do for it until our veterinarian can examine it?

A. If you are unable to obtain veterinary assistance quickly, the first thing to do is to isolate the bird from any other birds that you may possess, and provide it with radiant heat. The best source of this type of heat is the lower wattage incandescent bulbs used on indoor plants. Place the bulb at one end of the cage, and cover the opposite three sides and top with a muslin or bedsheet material. Place the light at one end of the perch so that the bird can get close to it if it wishes, or can move away if it becomes too warm. If the bird is under more extended therapy, it is advisable to use a dark colored regular incandescent bulb, so that it does not keep the bird awake all night. Blue, green, or red colored bulbs appear to be the most acceptable colors.

Antibiotic therapy is very questionable. The plus side is that it may solve your bird's problem. The negative side is that it could seriously impair the process of bacteriological culture and sensitivity testing. There are many antibiotics readily available to the general public in pet shops, but their use could limit professional diagnostic capabilities. Instead, use kaopectate type preparations for diarrhea, and anti-histamine cough syrups for respiratory problems. Administer two or three drops twice daily for a parakeet, and 1/2 tsp. (40 drops) for a macaw. Adjust dosages between 8 gm. and 800 gm. body weight. An average Amazon parrot weighs about one pound (454 gm.). •

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