

# Veterinary Viewpoints

compiled by Amy Worell, D.V.M.  
Woodland Hills, California

**Question:** I am feeding two Blue-fronted Amazons that I recently purchased through a quarantine station. They are about ten weeks of age and on a monkey chow-based diet. Their stool is light brown with a large, watery ring. The veterinarian cultured yeast from the stool, which was then treated, and recultured to be negative. They have been given stool of a Yellow-naped Amazon to help re-establish normal intestinal flora. I am concerned that they are too thin, but they are happy and playful. What could have accounted for the watery stool? What is the weight of a mature Blue-front and how long after weaning does it reach that weight?

D. Davidson, New Mexico

**Answer:** Diet will affect the color of stool in birds. Monkey chow-based diets will produce a light brown color. The large, watery ring around the fecal matter suggests increased urine output. This may be the result of the amount of water in your

formula mix, or a psychologically produced increased water intake which often occurs when birds are being weaned and exposed to free choice water, or it may be the result of a true disease. A proper, in-depth workup should be considered.

I do not recommend giving another bird's stool to re-establish normal intestinal flora after treating birds. This practice is often done with rabbits that need normal bacteria to digest their food but, in the case of birds, this practice can spread Psittacosis, Salmonella and other diseases.

Mature Blue-fronted Amazons weigh from 350 to 475 grams. This varies with body size. Amazons mature at 2-1/2 to 5 years (sexual maturity), but are often at their heaviest weight as weanlings (90 to 120 days).

James M. Harris, D.V.M.  
Oakland, California

**Answer:** It has been my experience with poultry, pigeons, and parrots,

that offspring are usually similar to their parents in both weight and size. This is not to say that the young cocks will be the size of the father or the young hens the size of the mother but, just as with people, the hereditary factors are important in determining final size.

As an example, a pair of Blue-fronts that I have had together for about five years finally produced two youngsters last year. The hen weighs about 450 grams, and the cock bird weighs about 480 grams. The babies, at six months of age, look very similar to the parents except slightly less blue, and their weight at this time is about 450 grams each.

It has been my experience that baby Amazons experience a "thinning" period near the end of hand-feeding and stop the steady increase in weight or even lose a bit. This, of course, goes along with mother nature's plan of getting these youngsters ready for flight.

Roger Harlin, D.V.M.  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

**Answer:** Color of the stool in birds is often dependent on the food items which are ingested. Extreme examples would include the ingestion of blueberries with a subsequently produced blue stool, and the ingestion of strawberries, which produces a bright red tinged stool. Babies being hand-fed a monkey chow-based diet may often produce a light brown stool, depending on the other ingredients in the hand-feeding diet. Large, watery rings around the feces is commonly observed in babies being hand-fed such a diet, as the amount of fluid in the diet well exceeds what the youngster would consume if left with the parents. So, potentially, the polyuria, or increase in noticeable urine output, may be normal. Other potential causes might include overgrowth of microorganisms in the intestinal tract, liver inflammation, or kidney dysfunction. A thorough workup including a Psittacosis test, complete blood count with serum chemistries, fecal parasite examination, and repeat of the crop and stool cultures should be considered.

Immature birds remind me of some 18 year old boys, lanky and slim. These young adults, as with the young birds, will slowly fill out to their mature body weight. Good luck with your babies!

Amy Worell, D.V.M.

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