

President's Message

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Where are we going in the '90s? The main challenges facing aviculture in the '90s will be the threats posed by avian viral diseases and by proposed and present restrictive regulations and laws. As we face these threats and work together to solve our problems, a new era of cooperation is being established in American aviculture.

Avian viral diseases have been with us a long time; we just have not always been able to identify them, prevent them or cure them. Veterinary research on viral diseases has advanced to the stage where many viral diseases have been identified and, hopefully, tests for their presence and vaccines for their prevention will become available. What can we aviculturists do to assist in speeding up this process? Funding is the critical element needed to solve the problem of viral diseases. Bird clubs and individuals can donate directly to research projects. Aviculturists can participate in fund-raising events where the proceeds are donated to research.

Restrictive laws and regulations are present in many cities, counties, states and now nationally. We do expect further restrictive legislation to be proposed on the state level as various animal rights organizations push forward their agenda: *no exotic pets!* and *no birds in cages!* We also know that a lawsuit has been brought in federal court against the U.S.D.A. to force them to monitor/inspect rats, mice and birds. (The belief is that their concern is mostly for those in laboratory

research or in public exhibitions.)

On the local level, individual aviculturists and club members need to monitor proposed changes in their city and county ordinances as there is an active movement towards changing these ordinances to be very restrictive in terms of defining what kinds of pets and how many pets can be kept. This includes property from condominium size to five acre farms. Constant vigilance on the local level will be needed to preserve your right to keep and breed birds.

The AFA will be monitoring state and national legislation through the many eyes and ears of the state coordinators, vice presidents and watchful individual aviculturists. One of the concerns that has been voiced is that of the rise in smuggling due to the restrictive nature of the Wild Bird Conservation Act and due to the increased opportunities presented by the changes resulting from the implementation of NAFTA. AFA is concerned about smuggling from two standpoints: it is a threat to the health of our exotic birds; it brings the threat of more restrictions on aviculturists (proposed by USFWS in attempts to control smuggling). We expect continued attempts on the part of various government agencies and organized animal rights groups to place restrictions and regulations on the owners of exotic birds, whether they are pet bird owners with two or three birds or breeders with large collections. In preparation for the continued on-slaughts on aviculture, the Board of Directors of AFA voted unanimously at their fall meeting to establish a legal defense fund to be used to protect the interests of aviculture through whatever legal means becomes necessary.

As we face the problems of viral disease and restrictive legislation, we also find ourselves in a new era of cooperation among aviculturists. This positive situation has been generated out of the recognition that if we are going to have viable populations of breeding birds of various species in the future, we must work together today to achieve that goal. Suddenly, aviculturists who have avoided record keeping have begun to keep records, to band birds and to microchip birds. Identifying an individual bird becomes important for selecting a non-related mate, thus maintaining genetic viability for future breeding stock. Aviculturists breeding similar species are working together in breeding programs, sharing stock and sharing information (for example, the new American Lory Association). Serious breeders continue to seek new information in their concern about nutrition, breeding behavior, and improvement of management practices. Many of these breeders attend avian seminars such as the Midwest Avian Research Expo. An interest in maintaining and meeting standards of exotic bird care is displayed by many aviculturists and exemplified by those certified by the Model Aviculture Program. In order to provide a needed service, the AFA is preparing a national registry which will make it possible for individuals to register their exotic birds, whether pets or breeding birds. Also, AFA is preparing information for individuals and clubs who wish to participate in a cooperative breeding program for a particular species. These programs will meet the needs of positive identification for individual birds and provision of a genealogy on breeding birds. ●

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