



## The Doctors Hands

Hands are wonderful things when dealing with animals. They let you pet your dog, scratch your cat, scratch your bird, and help remove those nasty feather cuticles on the head. Hands help us communicate with animals—and they help us locate health problems.

With my hands I can:

- Locate a fracture on the leg or wing
- Find a gun pellet under the skin
- Locate a feather cyst
- Find an egg
- Feel an enlarged liver
- Notice a foreign object in the crop.
- Feel changes from metabolic bone disease in the legs or back
- Find a mass on the skin
- Feel some masses in the abdomen
- Know that there is a leak in the airsack
- Feel old trauma on the keel or side, or old fracture of the wings or legs
- Can know the birds diet is too high in fat and/or seed

I believe all thorough Doctors use their senses to locate problems. Sight is obvious, and probably our primary sense. But touch is the second most important sense. Beware of a doctor who will not pick up your bird. (The exception being, a bird who is very weak or in severe respiratory distress, where we must discuss priorities first).

Then we have hearing and smell. A good stethoscope will tell you a lot about the heart and lungs, and we frequently can hear problems with the sinuses and lungs. You can smell some problems with the ears, sinuses, crop and of course stool. The only sense I don't use much is taste—lucky for the animals—and me.

And my so-called lesson today is to encourage you to use your senses too. Know what is normal for your bird. Don't be afraid to sniff their breath or feel their crop. If you hear a click or wheeze, there is a reason for it. Don't wait too long to see a vet who will do a more complete "physical" exam and recommend other tests if called for.

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