



Picking

If any on you are sitting there with bated breath thinking "maybe THIS article can tell me what to do," you'll be a little let down.

Feathers can be plucked (pulled) or over preened (shredded). It can be done with their beak, nails or feet. The bird in question, or a bird it is friends with or an aggressive bird in the house can do it.

Plucking and some reasons why they do

Rarely can it be caused by external parasites. It has been shown there are some environmental causes, such as low humidity, poor diet, allergies and lack of exposure to full spectrum light.

Some diseases can cause plucking, or baldness. Beak and Feather disease. Internal parasites. Some lotions that people put on there hands. Both external and internal fungal infections. Arthritis or muscle pain. Kidney or abdominal pain, ear infections. Heavy metal intoxications. Diseases or blockage of the (uropygial) preen gland. And we haven't even touched the surface.

There are emotional causes. Boredom, sadness, loneliness, hormones! Stress... a storm, company, a change of cage location, new cage. Children. A change in diet or feeding time, a change in ambient temperature. Lengthening or shortening of daylight. A new pet or a pet that has gone away. Noise pollution. Children. Outside animals they can see: hawks, cats, raccoons. Outside things; shadows, planes, hot air balloons. Inside things; balloons, boxes, things we have to move by their cage.

Things that may help resolve/ isolate feather destructive behavior

Increase humidity and encourage bathing. Well-rounded diet of pellets, seed and fresh foods. Toys and activities to stimulate play and exercise.

Change—keeping the bird in a non-stressful quieter area where it can still be part of the group. Corners or tents (as long as egg laying is not a problem). An area where other birds can't stare it down. More sleep time. Never, ever, give it stimulants such as coffee, tea, colas or chocolate. Remember fear and stress are stimulants too, including loud TV or advertisements, family members screaming and second hand cigarette smoke.

Keep notes—does the activity get worse with a certain food, certain times of the year, company, illness in the family, a vacation you took, someone new doing the feeding. Be a good observer!

Get your bird checked—blood work, fecal, gram stain will help rule out some causes, but seldom tells us what the true problem is. And don't be surprised if many of these items are brought up during the exam and maybe be a little worried if they are not.

Some of the sweetest birds I know are pluckers. They deserve love and a good home and good care. Don't let them down.

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