



Pacific Pets
More than just a Pet Shop!
Discounted Pet Supplies



Why Does My Bird Bite?

Many people who keep pet budgerigars, cockatiels, galahs or parrots will experience a bite from their bird. Sometimes it comes as a shock to the owner when a bird which has previously been very tame attempts to bite without reason. However, biting is a natural behavior for birds and owners need to recognise the reasons why birds bite and take steps to avoid it happening. Many of the parrots have extremely strong beaks and can cause a severe bite.

Many birds, especially young birds "mouth" human hands and fingers. This is not biting but exploration of the bird's environment. Parrots explore taste and texture with their tongue. Shrieking and pulling the hand away will either frighten the bird or in many cases reward it for the behavior and condition it to bite. Frightened birds will bite - it is their only defense. It is best not to let strangers and children handle the bird until you are confident that the bird feels safe with them.

In the wild, birds "get up" at sunrise and go to bed at sunset but in a home environment many birds are subjected to long hours of "daylight" with artificial lighting, television etc. They become stressed through lack of rest and may become cranky. Covering the bird's cage to ensure it gets 12 hours of sleep is essential. Large parrots may be very territorial and guard their cage or any area that they consider to be theirs. Sometimes birds bond very closely to one person in the family and will try to drive off any one who approaches. Allowing a bird to sit on your shoulder is risky as if the bird decides to guard its territory it may see the human head as a "rival" and bite.

During the breeding season some of the larger parrots may become aggressive, as may adolescent birds. Cockatoos in particular are great show-offs and may become over stimulated by attention given to their antics and bite in over-excitement. Most birds give some warning that they are going to bite. Strutting, fluffing up the head feathers, raising the crest, head bobbing and the eyes dilating and constricting rapidly are warning signs. Do not try to discipline the bird for biting, birds do not recognise this. Either cover the cage or leave the bird in a quiet room. If the bird is out of the cage do not try to pick it up - you will be bitten. Either leave the room or try to herd it back into the cage.

As a survival instinct, sick birds hide signs of their illness. A check-up from a veterinarian is the first step if a bird shows any sudden unexplained change in behavior some birds become habitual biters, often because they are frightened, have been ill-treated in the past or have learnt that biting gets them what they want. It takes quite a lot of patience to train these birds to be handled and your veterinarian may be able to refer you to a specialist in bird behavior

Reference:

Pet care Information & Advisory Service Australia Pty Ltd