

## hazards

### HAZARDS!

MUCH LIKE small children, pet parrots face a minefield of potential dangers in the typical house

and yard. Parrots are curious, playful creatures that love to investigate their surroundings,

including objects, plants and the enclosed spaces in your house, such as the area underneath the

sink. It's up to you to protect your bird from situations and substances that could seriously

injure or kill it.

Fumes and poisons

There's a reason canaries made such terrific poison gas detectors in the early coal mines. Birds

have delicate respiratory systems susceptible to strong fumes.

High on the list of no-nos for parrots: avocados, chocolate and plug-in air fresheners.

You should consider any product or substance that gives off a vapor potentially deadly to your

parrot. Never expose your bird to aerosols, cigarette smoke, or fingernail polish removal.

Plug-in air fresheners, fumes from overheated non-stick cookware and other Teflon-coated

products (including space heaters), and even pine-scented car air fresheners also can kill

birds. If you cannot avoid using these products, make sure your bird is not in the same room and

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that you ventilate the house thoroughly with fresh air.

Parrots are inveterate chewers, which has lead more than one unsupervised bird to an early

demise. Anything containing lead, such as paint in old houses, or zinc, found in cages

constructed with hardware cloth, is poisonous.

Keep electrical cords out of beak's reach. Never let your bird chew indiscriminately on plants,

inside or outside of the house; many familiar plants, shrubs and trees are poisonous when

ingested. Cactus plants in the home can seriously injure flying birds. Never give your bird

chocolate, avocados (including guacamole), or alcohol; all are poisonous.

Birds that have ingested a poisonous substance may have seizures or vomit. A bird that is

vomiting whips its head from side to side rather than pump it up and down, the motion used to

regurgitate food, an affectionate behavior.

If your parrot acts poisoned or you think it may have eaten or inhaled something harmful, remove

it from the suspected source and call your vet immediately. If you cannot contact your regular

vet, you can get help by calling the poison control hotline of the American Society for the

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals at 888-426-4435. A staff of veterinarians will instruct you on

what to do. Have your credit card ready to pay the \$45 charge.

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### Accidents

Do not keep your bird in the kitchen, where it could land on a hot stove or be made ill by

fluctuating temperatures or fumes, and never place a cage directly against a drafty or overly

sunny window. Many species of parrots may come from the steamy jungle, but birds are just as

susceptible to heatstroke and sunstroke as any other animal. If your bird enjoys looking

outside, as many do, situate its cage a few feet away from a window.

An overheated bird pants with its beak open and may hold its wings slightly apart from its body.

Make sure your bird always has access to shade and plenty of cool water to drink.

Parrots and electrical cords don't mix.

Conversely, do not take an indoor bird outdoors on cold days.

Keep toilet lids closed to prevent accidental drowning, turn off ceiling fans when your parrot

is out of its cage, and don't use flypaper or mouse traps. Clip your bird's wings so that it

cannot escape out an open door, or fly into a window or mirror. Head injuries can kill or cause

seizures for months or years afterward.

Some bird toys also can harm your bird. Long ropes that come unbraided can wrap around a bird's

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neck or foot, causing strangulation or the bird to chew off toes to escape. Jingle bells and

chain links can snare toes and beaks. Keep an eye on plush toys and huts to make sure your

parrot isn't ingesting the material.

### Other animals

Despite their powerful beaks, parrots are helpless against animals equipped with sharp claws and

teeth. No matter how mellow your kitty may seem around birds, a sudden instinctual impulse could

change the situation in a flash. Regardless, contact with a cat's saliva, which contains a

bacteria deadly to birds called Pasteurella, could be fatal. A normally docile family pooch can

seriously injure a fragile bird with one ill-tempered nip or clumsily placed paw.

The safest, least restrictive household for a parrot is one without cats or canines. For the

sake of small birds, especially, you should seriously consider not adding a dog or cat to your

menagerie if you already own a parrot and vice versa.

If you must have other animals, following some common-sense rules will help keep your parrot

safe. Never allow a bird and a cat freedom inside the house simultaneously. To be on the safe

side, never leave a dog unsupervised around a bird that is out of its cage.

Never leave unattended a bird you've brought outside. Even clipped birds can flutter short

hazards  
distances and may be able to clear a backyard fence. Even if you are nearby, it takes only a few seconds for a cat or other bold predator to attack. In fact, in rare cases, hawks have been known to pluck parrots off their owners' shoulders. Raptors also can seriously injure your bird through the mesh of an enclosed aviary. Protect aviary birds with double walls.

Different species may be able to get along if similar in size.

Thinking about adding another parrot to the family? In general, parrots adapt well to

same-species cagemates if you gradually introduce the newcomer. However, males of some species,

such as cockatoos and lorries, may seriously injure or kill females, even if they have been

housed together for a long time.

Different species should never be forced to share the same cage and may even need to be kept

separate outside of their cages to prevent dangerous conflicts. Some species of parrots, even

smaller ones such as lorries, are aggressive toward all other birds.

Cockatiels and budgies might get along; budgies have been known to harass their larger cockatiel

cagemates.