

Bird Health Notes:



CAGE HYGIENE

What do I clean my bird's cage with?

Most birds have the misfortune of eating in their bathroom and defecating in their kitchen! It is essential to keep a bird's environment as clean as possible. The bottom of the cage should be lined with a disposable paper such as newspaper or paper towel that can be thrown away every day. Newsprint is now free of lead so should be of little concern. White birds who insist on playing in the newspaper may get grey newsprint on their white feathers that is easily washed off. The sand paper that is sold in the pet stores to line the bottom of the cage is of little beneficial value.

Dirt, dust, faecal matter, bits of food and feather dust accumulate constantly on the cage and everything in it. The entire cage should be scrubbed down at least once weekly with soap and hot water plus a good disinfectant. Most disinfectants should be allowed to sit wet for 30 minutes on the surface being cleaned. A thorough fresh water rinse is always advised after any application of any soap or disinfectant. Food and water dishes should be cleaned in the same fashion and should be washed daily.

Wood, wicker and bamboo are porous materials that are impossible to sterilise. Dirt and bacteria can penetrate these substances very deeply, therefore it is advisable to replace these items every 6 - 12 months.

What disinfectants should I use?

There are many different kinds of disinfectants available that are capable of killing a variety of germs including viruses, bacteria and fungi. For home use most general disinfectant-deodoriser

products are quite adequate. One cup of household chlorine bleach in one gallon of water is effective against many organisms. To be most effective, disinfectants should be applied to a washed surface. For aviary or flock situations a broader range disinfectant may be more beneficial. *Discuss your specific needs with your vet.*

Many disinfectants need to be used with great care and may release toxic fumes. They must be used in the absence of the bird and with proper ventilation. Remember, *rinse well!*