

MOULTING

Moulting is a normal means by which birds change their plumage. In their natural environment various species generally moult at specific seasons of the year. Cage birds, however, exist under varying environmental conditions and these factors may influence the moulting cycle. Many parrots are tropical birds and moult single feathers throughout the year.

During a moult the bird is under considerable nutritional and physiological stress, and the supply of animal protein and replacement of the drinking water with 50% milk and water ensures an increased level of nutrition during the moulting period. Heavy moulting is often associated with pruritus so careful examination is necessary to differentiate between this and ectoparasites infestation.

Birds with broken feathers should have these removed in order to stimulate new feather growth, which takes 4-6 weeks in the healthy bird. This should be performed by a veterinary surgeon.

NB: - You should be concerned if there is excessive feather loss during moult to the extent that bald spots appear or if the new feathers are misshapen or grow in so slowly that the bird almost looks as though it has been plucked. These may be signs of deficiency diseases, parasite infestations, or serious mistakes in environmental conditions or diet.

REFERENCES

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- W. T. Turner (1988) Skin, Feathers, Beak, Cere and Uropygial Gland. In: *Manual of Parrots, Budgerigars, and Other Psittacine Birds*. Ed C. J. Price. BSAVA, Gloucester p 103-107