

Cockatoo Prolapse Syndrome

This syndrome is extremely common in adult Umbrella (*Cacatua alba*) and Moluccan (*Cacatua moluccensis*) cockatoos. Generally these birds are strongly bonded to a human and have several of the following historical characteristics.

1. Hand-raised cockatoos of the above noted species
2. Experienced delayed weaning and/or continued begging for food– especially warm, soft foods
3. Very physically attached to at least one person
4. Demonstrating either child/parent or mate/mate relationships with their owners, although these signs may not be obvious to the humans to which they are directed.
5. Tendency to hold the stool in their vent for prolonged periods (i.e. overnight) rather than defecating in their cage, producing a huge morning deposit, this may be exaggerated by potty training these birds.

Prolonged begging for food causes straining and dilation of the vent. Misplaced sexual attraction to their human surrogate mate will also cause vent straining and movement. Retention of stool in the vent for prolonged periods stretches and dilates the cloaca. The vent lips are often grossly stretched and appear flaccid. Behavioral modification is often difficult for owners to accomplish, since it involves altering the tight bond that they have with their bird. Behaviors that increase this inappropriate bonding in affected cockatoos include stroking the bird, especially on the back (i.e. petting), feeding the bird warm foods by hand or mouth and cuddling the bird close to the body.

Cloacopexy is a surgical procedure that can be used to hold the prolapse in a reduced position against the body wall without compromising the vent. However, if the bird still perceives the owner as either its parent or its mate, it will continue to strain and the problem may recur despite surgical correction. Surgical correction can be repeated if necessary. If the cloacal lips have been overly

stretched, surgery to reduce the opening may be considered. This too may recur over time and need to be repeated. Some veterinarians have found that a total change of environment and human companionship (i.e. finding the bird a new home, either temporarily or permanently) is necessary to correct this problem.

Cockatoos that are independent of humans do not exhibit cloacal prolapse. If an owner is serious about trying to change their bird's behavioral patterns, behavioral modification will be necessary. Some success has been noted when Clomipramine is added to the behavior therapy. Websites that address behavioral issues in captive parrots include those listed below.

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