

Things are Changing

BY REBECCA K. O'CONNOR

A relationship with a parrot can last a lifetime and with any long-term relationship there is a guarantee that something is going to change. In the fast moving and easily mobile lives that many people lead, changes in schedules, residences, and roommates is likely. However, not every pet parrot is prepared to handle a new twist in its daily routine. Sometimes these changes can cause undesirable behaviors such as aggression, plucking, and mutilation.

In the wild, a parrot's survival depends heavily on recognizing and defining every aspect of its environment. Surprises and unknowns can be deadly in a parrot's natural surroundings. A mysterious animal might be a predator. An unfamiliar object might be a danger. A wild parrot would quickly fly away from an unknown to keep itself safe, but a caged parrot has no place to go. It should be surprising that pet parrots often have difficulty with environmental changes. This does not mean that you should avoid changing your lifestyle. It simply means that you should do your best to prepare your parrot for inevitable changes.

The best way to avoid problem behavior brought on by change is to introduce your parrot to change very early in its life. A bird in its first year inherently takes in as much information as possible. At this age the bird is more likely to be fearless, depending on its parents to demonstrate when something is dangerous. If you have a parrot this young you should introduce it to as many new things as possible. You should still watch the bird to make

sure that it is comfortable in any situation, but now is the time to let it learn that there is little new in life to fear.

As you are training your young bird, think about what the future might hold. There are many things that you can prepare your parrot for early in its life. Invite new people to your home often and let them interact carefully with the

that new experiences are positive if you don't want similar situations to be a problem in the future.

Another way to keep your parrot prepared for changes in life is to avoid a static living situation. Switch things around periodically. Be mindful of your routine and change it occasionally so that your parrot doesn't get unnerved when suddenly cage cleaning happens at night instead of the morning. That doesn't mean you should make your world chaotic, just try not to be entirely predictable. If it's possible, periodically move your parrot's cage for a change of scenery and in preparation of bigger moves. It even helps to rearrange your furniture from time to time.

If you have a parrot that wasn't introduced to new things at a young age, or despite your best efforts is terrified of every change, it's not the end of the world if you suddenly have to move across the country. Think ahead and prepare your parrot as best you can. If you have to move a nervous bird to a new home, try to arrange everything as close to the old set up as possible, giving the parrot as much familiarity as you can.

If your parrot has begun to exhibit undesirable behavior, find a good avian consultant right away. If your bird is beginning to pluck, a trip to the vet might be in order, as well. Don't feel like a failure. Parrots can be complicated and there's no shame in asking for help. Your parrot may be a companion for the rest of your life. Life is about change and should be fun for both of you. *B*

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parrot. You may have new roommates, house guests, a new spouse, or even children down the road. If you don't have children in your house, invite friends with kids to visit, so that your parrot can see that humans come in smaller and often louder packages as well. Make sure that visiting children are respectful around your bird, staying calm and moving slowly. If you think you might add a dog to your house at some point, invite friends with well-behaved dogs to bring their canine friend for a visit. The dog and the parrot don't need to interact, but seeing that dogs are nothing to worry about at a young age can make a huge difference to the parrot. Make sure the dog doesn't do anything that might terrify your parrot. Whatever experience your bird has it will remember for the rest of its life, especially when it is in this learning stage. It is absolutely critical