



**HILARY STERN, DVM DABVP**

**EXOTIC PET CLINIC OF SANTA CRUZ  
5400 SCOTTS VALLEY DRIVE, SUITE B  
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## **Making Your Home “Parrot Proof”**

Everyone knows that when you have a toddler you must “child-proof” your home to ensure his safety. The same is true for those of us who have pet parrots in our homes. With the curiosity and mischievousness of a two-year-old, a beak designed for destruction, and the ability to fly, parrots in our homes can get into loads of trouble very quickly. Below are some hints on how to keep your pet parrot happy, healthy, and out of harm’s way.

### **Consider Clipping your Bird’s Wings**

Flight is an adaptation for living in the wild, not for living in our homes. There are many household dangers lurking for the flighted parrot. Birds can fly into windows or mirrors, resulting in fatal injuries. Other pets, parrots included, can inflict dangerous bites. Open doors and windows lead to the perils of the outdoors, including predators, cars, & starvation. The desire to chew, which is healthy in the wild, can lead to the ingestion of toxic materials. Sources of heat such as stoves, heaters, and fires can cause serious burns. Doors, which make a nice place to perch, can crush toes, feet, or legs if they swing shut. An open toilet bowl or pot of water can be a death sentence if a bird should land inside.

It is the rare household where all these dangers can be avoided. Unless you are sure that your house is 100% bird safe, keep your bird’s wings clipped.



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## Don't Let Your Bird Chew on Household Items

Birds' beaks grow continuously, and chewing is a natural behavior. That being said, some birds gnaw everything in sight, and some chew hardly at all. Below is a list of materials that can be toxic if ingested. This list is not exhaustive, however, so err on the side of caution and only let your bird chew on bird-safe toys.

Children's toys	Nicotine (cigarettes, patches, gum)	Costume jewelry
Stained glass	Grout	Pennies
Plaster	Fertilizers	Metal twist ties
Batteries	Seeds for planting	Rust
Houseplants	Lead shot	Soft plastics
Linoleum	Paints	Rodenticides
Solder (on stereos, lamp shades, chandeliers, etc.)	Petroleum products	Medications
Fishing sinkers	Galvanized wire	Nuts and bolts

## Avoid Toxic Fumes

The avian respiratory tract is extremely sensitive to inhaled chemicals. Products that do not cause problems in people or other mammals can be highly toxic to birds. Below is a list of some common products that are not safe to use around birds. If your bird breathes in these chemicals it can result in symptoms ranging from mild illness to sudden death.

Scented candles	Oven cleaners	Insecticides (flea spray, ant spray, cockroach spray, plant spray, termite fumigants, etc.)
Air fresheners	Burning food fumes	Paint fumes
Incense	Scented cleaning products	Soldering fumes
Perfumes	Carpet cleaners (spray and powder)	Carbon monoxide gas
Aerosol sprays	Drain cleaners	Gas fumes
Self-cleaning cycle on an oven	Smoke	New carpets / furniture
Overheated non-stick surfaces such as cookware, drip pans, irons, and ironing board covers	Bleach & pool chemicals	
	Combustion exhaust (cars, furnaces)	



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## **Only Use Safe Toys**

While no toy is 100% safe for all animals, it is important to hedge your bet and select toys that are made of nontoxic materials. Untreated wood, jute rope, and palm fronds are safe products commonly used in bird toys. Acrylics and stainless steel, which are too hard to chew, are also safe products. Avoid soft plastics that your bird can chew, and soft metals that bend. And be sure to supervise your bird with its toys; if your bird is swallowing parts of a toy, even a nontoxic one, it can block the intestines and is unsafe.