

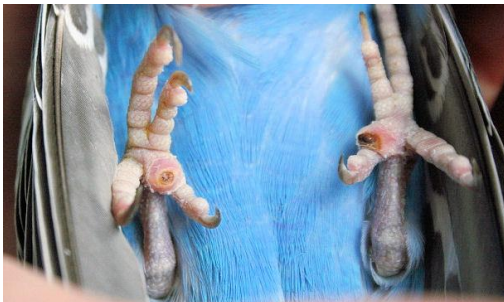
Managing Mild Bumblefoot (Pododermatitis)

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What is bumblefoot?

Bumblefoot (AKA pododermatitis) describes any inflammatory or degenerative condition of a bird's foot. Bumblefoot can range in severity from very mild thinning and redness on the bottoms of the feet and ankle to infected, large, open wounds with bone and tendon/ligament damage. Mild bumblefoot is common in pet parrots. The severe forms of the disease happen most often in waterfowl and inappropriately housed birds of prey.

Moderate to severe bumblefoot:



Mild bumblefoot:



Why does bumblefoot occur?

In pet parrots, bumblefoot occurs for several reasons.

- Obesity. Pet parrots are often overweight so their feet have to deal with a larger amount of pressure.
- Perching. Pet parrots usually have only 2-4 perching options while in the wild they would have almost endless perches to choose from. Limited perching options leads to the feet being worn in the same way day after day. In addition, inappropriate perches, such as ones with sandpaper or ones that are too small or wide, will cause excessive wear on the feet. (A bird's foot should wrap about 75% of the way around a perch if appropriately sized, not including the toenails)
- Sedentary lifestyle. Most parrots sit in their cages most of the day rather than flying around from place to place. This also leads to a consistent pattern of wear on the feet.
- Medical problems. Birds with arthritis or injury of one leg are more prone to wearing their feet abnormally due to abnormal stances or weight bearing.
- Malnutrition. Birds on a poor quality diet, such as 100% seed, are prone to bumblefoot.

What can you do at home?

--Patients with mild bumblefoot can be managed with some simple changes to the environment. We like to provide a variety of perches: a corner/flat perch (see images below), rope perch, padded perch etc. A swing can also be a nice option for birds with excessive wear on their feet. In patients with bumblefoot, we recommend removing rough/concrete perches that help to keep nails short.

*Corner perch:



*Chinchilla perch (for smaller birds)



*To pad perches, we use a dowel rod, java wood or manzanita perch that is a little thinner in diameter than what we want for the bird. We then apply self adherent ace bandage followed by Vet-wrap/Coban or similar self-adherent bandage. The Vet-wrap can be changed when soiled and is less stringy when chewed on than the ace bandage. The Vet-wrap can be cut off with an Exacto-knife and replaced as needed when soiled or chewed upon. See image below.



--Obese birds should be encouraged to lose weight. You can discuss how to do this safely with your doctor.

--Increased exercise can help as well. You can do flapping exercises with your bird, start captive foraging activities, encourage running around on the floor or climbing ladders, and, if it can be done safely, allow your bird to fly.

How long will it take for the bumblefoot to go away?

--It can take a long time for bumblefoot to resolve. As long as things are going in the right direction, we recommend patience.

What if the bumblefoot gets worse?

--If your bird's foot lesions are getting worse then a recheck exam is needed. In some cases bandages or even surgery are indicated.