



BIRD COLLARS

There are many situations in which a bird may need to wear an Elizabethan collar or neck brace. They are often used to protect a bird from biting or chewing itself when other solutions are not working. Different types of collars exist and the one chosen for your bird reflects his size and what it is needed for. The length of time your bird will wear the collar also depends on the nature of his problem.

Though for their own good, the fitting of a collar is a somewhat stressful event for many birds. It is not unusual for us to keep a patient under observation for a short time in order to see how well the bird adapts to the collar. This also gives us the opportunity to make any necessary adjustments to it. Once ready to be discharged, your bird will initially need close monitoring at home and a few cage modifications to make his return as safe and simple as possible.

A bird with a newly placed collar is likely to be nervous, off-balance and unwilling to perch. Your bird may be quite frustrated (chewing on anything in sight) or may even sulk (lay on the cage floor or lean in a corner). This adaptation phase takes between a few hours to a day or two at most. Some birds are more relaxed than others and may already be back to climbing (and, occasionally, even flying) on the first day.

A towel should be placed for padding on the floor and along the sides of the cage bottom to soften potential falls. The fabric's texture will also provide for better purchase to make it easier for your bird to stand and walk while he becomes accustomed to the collar. For his comfort, it is suggested to **lower a perch as close to the bottom as possible or use tape to immobilize it on the cage floor.**

When your bird seems ready to return to his normal activities, a simple cage layout will make it easier for him to maneuver. You should remove unnecessary accessories (cumbersome toys or perches that may end up in his way) and **keep the main perches relatively low.** To provide a better foothold, you can **use rope perches or a layer of conforming bandage (VetRap) wrapped around his regular perches.** Until your bird's balance is no longer in question, it is safest to still keep a towel across the cage floor, even if under the usual paper.

Your bird's food and water intake is the most important thing to monitor at home, especially over the first few days. To ensure easy access, you should place heavy shallow **dishes of food and water near him** on the cage floor. Food can also be offered on the towel, without a bowl. Offering some spray millet, fruits and vegetables or other treats may stimulate your bird's appetite if he is being difficult. Empty seed hulls, pellet crumbs and nibbled food items are evidence of appetite but you can also **judge by the size and quantity of stool (green/brown component of droppings) passed** throughout the day. Cleaning the cage bottom every day is the only way to properly evaluate appetite and stool production.

If there are **multiple birds in a cage**, remaining with them may be good moral support for your bird and more incentive for him to resume normal behavior.

On the other hand, **bullying** could result when keeping a vulnerable bird with others. If you suspect that your bird is being intimidated by another, it is best to **separate** them.

If they are doing well together, great! However, reliable evaluation of your bird's appetite is no longer possible since other birds have access to food. You need to **monitor you bird's weight with a small kitchen scale that is accurate enough** for his species. This should initially be done every morning, and afterwards, on a regular basis for safety. Minor fluctuations may be normal, but **constant decrease of bodyweight is not normal.**

A bird requiring a collar for an extended period of time will need assistance bathing. You can gently mist your bird with water or, for better results, AVIx Bird Rain. In the case of non-plastic collars, avoid getting the collar wet.

One last consideration is the monitoring of the collar itself and its effectiveness. Some birds can be quite resourceful and still find ways to pick at themselves, despite their collar. On rare occasions, some may even manage to partially undo or destroy their collar. These problems can usually be resolved by replacing the original collar with a modified second one.

Be sure to **respect the re-evaluation schedule** as discussed with your veterinarian.

If you encounter any problems at home, it is important to communicate them to us. If needed, an earlier appointment can be scheduled. **If there is a major problem (your bird falls repeatedly, remains lethargic, is not eating, injures himself with the collar) and you are unable to contact us, most collars can be taken off without assistance.** Keep the collar on hand and advise us of the situation as soon as possible.

Please call us immediately if you have questions or if your bird is not doing well with the collar.