

Water Bottles in Birds

Some bird owners prefer water bottles because open water bowls are vulnerable to contamination from droppings, food, and other debris. Although use of water bottles can make the cage environment tidier, their use can also prevent many normal behaviors that enrich pet bird life. Many birds not only enjoy dunking their food in their water bowls, but some individuals may even bath or splash around in their water bowls.

If you elect to provide your bird with a water bottle, it is imperative that your pet be properly trained and that appropriate equipment is purchased:

Selecting the bottle

Bottles are available in glass, resin, or plastic. Drinking tubes or nozzles are made from stainless steel and a small ball inside regulates water flow. The ball is sometimes colored red for birds, because it is thought this will attract the bird's interest. A metal guard may be necessary between the bottle and cage to prevent beak damage to plastic bottles.

Purchase several bottles so that you can always provide your bird with a fresh, clean replacement. Cage height and bar spacing will determine water bottle size, so have cage dimensions on hand when you shop for water bottles.

Mounting the bottle

Mount the water bottle where it can be easily reached. Instead of directly over the perch, the bottle should ideally hang off to the side. Hang the bottle at a height where the bird needs to extend its neck only slightly to reach the nozzle.

Training your bird

Demonstrate how to release water from the tube by tapping the ball bearing several times while your bird is watching. Most birds are curious and will immediately investigate the water bottle on their own. You can also pick up your pet bird, and gently tap its beak against the metal ball to make water come out.

Training a bird to drink from a water bottle can take anywhere from a few minutes to a few days.

- Do NOT go by the water line to determine if your bird is drinking from the tube as a decrease in water can occur from leakage.
- DO maintain a water bowl in the cage until you are confident that your bird is drinking from the water bottle.

Checking the bottle

After initial installation and after each and every cleaning, press the metal ball bearing several times to release the water. Also check the nozzle daily to make sure it is clear and water is flowing normally. Some birds stuff seeds or other debris inside, or the ball can simply become stuck. Some birds also learn to use their nozzle like a shower, so check bottles frequently to be sure they have not been drained.

Cleaning the bottle

Use of water bottles does not necessarily reduce your bird's risk of bacterial overgrowth. When water bottles are not kept scrupulously clean, bacteria like *Pseudomonas* can overgrow and potentially cause problems.

Most water bottles are dishwasher safe, but also periodically scrub the inside of your bird's bottles and tubes with small bottle brushes.

References

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