

Pet Care Expert Reverses Feather Picking

Tucson, Ariz. -- Results of a decade long clinical trial conclusively shows for the first time that dietary supplements can help eliminate feather picking in birds. Dr. Lisa S. Newman, N.D., Ph.D., author of eight books on natural pet care, recently completed a second controlled study on the treatment of feather picking in birds with compelling results. In 1989, Dr. Newman concluded an initial one-year study of caged birds with a history of feather picking. These results have recently been reconfirmed after an additional 10 years of recording nutraceutical data and several six-week follow-ups.

Dr. Newman's studies revealed that feather picking in problematic birds could be stopped by feeding birds Azmira®'s Mega Pet Daily™, a nutritional fully-balanced vitamin and mineral supplement, combined with either Azmira®'s R & R Essence™ or Obsessiveness™, both remedies derived from flowers. "Feather picking is one of the most frustrating conditions of caged birds for bird owners due to the difficulty in diagnosing the root cause and providing the appropriate medication," said Dr. Newman, Doctor of Naturopathy who also holds a Ph.D. in holistic nutrition. She noted the four most common conditions behind the majority of self-mutilating birds are nutritional imbalance, infectious diseases such as psittacosis and French molt, food allergies and endocrine issues such as low thyroid levels.

In the study, she compared a group of 17 mature birds, ranging in age from 2 to 9 years of age. Half of the birds were small parrot-types, mostly Conures and African Greys, while the other half was comprised of Cockatiels and Budgerigars (budgies). Each participating bird was lacking approximately 40% to 60% of his or her feather cover, picking for a minimum of six months (many to the point of drawing blood and diagnosed by its veterinarian as being self-mutilating). In addition, all of the birds were selected for the study due to their non-responsiveness to any prior treatments.

The birds were separated into four control groups with a sampling of each species in each group. Birds classified as either "stressed" or "obsessive" were given Azmira® Mega Pet Daily™, a ¼ capsule per two ounces of seed every other day. Dr. Newman supplemented the "stressed" birds' diet with Azmira®'s R & R Essence™ and the "obsessive" fowl were treated with Azmira®'s Obsessiveness™. By far, at 87%, this grouping fared the best with a total elimination of the symptoms.

These birds were diagnosed by their veterinarians to be feather pickers due to either environmental stress-induced issues or behavioral obsessive factors. The environmentally stressed feather pickers showed signs of appetite issues, vocalizations in response to external stimuli, and "family issues" such as lack of attention, teasing or death of a mate. Obsessive birds demonstrated negative behavioral patterns such as head waving or bopping, rocking, excessive perch or toy picking and withdrawal or aggression. One-quarter of these birds showed signs of improvement within the first week, half improved within three weeks and 75% at the end of one month.

Four birds in the second group, given only the Azmira® Mega Pet Daily™, a ¼ capsule for every two ounces of seed every other day, came in a close second at 79% and showing signs of improvement within one month. The four birds in the third group received only the recommended amount of either R & R Essence™ or Obsessiveness™. This group recorded a response rate of only 43%. The five remaining birds of the 17 were the control group, and they were given no additional treatment other than standard medical care. Dr. Newman reported this group actually got significantly worse.

When the feathers of the birds receiving some form of naturopathic support or supplements reappeared, the colors were noticeably more vivid and the sheen was maintained. The bird keepers cataloging the daily records throughout the study also noted that 100% of the supplemented birds also showed improved socialization and learning skills. Additional information on the study and Azmira® products can be obtained from their website, <http://www.azmira.com>, or by calling them directly at 1-800-497-5665.

An Evaluation of Feather Picking in caged Birds

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ABSTRACT

It is shown that nutritional augmentation -- to fuel curative processes such as detoxification (blood purification), improved organ function (to increase nutrient utilization), and superior feather growth -- can be utilized with homeopathically induced “health responses” to substantially mitigate (symptoms or condition). Elimination of the nutritional foundation protocol resulted in a reoccurrence of the behavior and obvious symptoms--regardless of the previous benefits the homeopathic therapy provided--rendering further homeopathic therapy less effective in general until supplementation was resumed.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most frustrating conditions in caged birds, both due to the difficulty in diagnosing the root cause of, as well as, hard to treat with medication, is that of feather picking. In 1989, Dr. Newman concluded an initial one-year study of caged birds with a history of feather picking with compelling conditions, ranging from lack of attention to thyroid imbalance. These results have recently been re-confirmed after an additional ten years of nutraceutical data and several six-week follow-ups.

All of the above-mentioned changes became even more pronounced during the second study with the nutritional foundation of Azmira®’s Mega Pet Daily™, a fully-balanced, potent vitamin and mineral supplement, rather than the less potent, basic supplementation as found in Azmira®’s SeaSupreme™ formulation previously used in 1989 -- although a maintenance protocol with SeaSupreme™ is possible for the majority of birds, once they have resumed full plumage on the Mega Pet Daily™. It was also shown that Azmira®’s homeopathically-prepared flower remedy for obsessive behavior supported quicker behavioral changes in a higher number of birds, especially the more chronic cases, than the previously used Bach Flower Rescue Remedy®. This is attributed to Azmira®’s homeopathically potentized flower product. All symptomatic birds had previously been treated with traditional behavioral modification, medications and veterinary supplementation with slight to none improvement noted prior to the study.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

There was a comparative six week study done on immune enhancing, feather-building nutrients, particularly the vitamins A, E, B-Complex and C with the minerals Zinc, Copper and Selenium, as well as the additional supportive (co-enzyme action) nutrients found in Mega Pet Daily™, manufactured for the firm Azmira®

(USA). These nutrients, combined, have been noted for their ability to address various conditions, especially the four common conditions behind the majority of self-mutilating birds. Although causes are numerous and often in conjunction with one another, nutritional imbalance, infectious diseases such as psittacosis and French molt, food allergies and endocrine issues such as low thyroid levels are commonly associated with feather picking. Homeopathically potentized flower remedies found in Azmira®'s Obsessiveness™ or R&R Essence™ formulas were utilized to deal with the more obvious obsessive or stress-related behaviors influencing the physical condition.

These birds were separated into four control groups; four supplemented only with Dr. Newman's vitamin/mineral protocol (Mega Pet Daily™ -- given ¼ capsule per two ounces of seed every other day), four subjects were supplemented (Mega Pet Daily™ at same feeding levels) and given the appropriate Azmira brand homeopathic flower remedy (one drop per ounce of drinking water, when changed daily) based on environmental stress-induced (R&R Essence™) or behavioral obsessive factors (Obsessiveness™), four birds were given only homeopathic support (Obsessiveness™ or R&R Essence™ at same rate of one drop per ounce of water) and five birds were given no additional treatment other than standard medical care.

“Environmental stress” requiring the R&R Essence™ was identified by appetite issues, vocalizations in response to external stimuli, and family issues (divorce, lack of attention, death of a mate, etc.) in addition to the feather picking whereas the obsessive formula was used in birds “exhibiting negative behavioral patterns” and constant movements such as head waving or bobbing, rocking, excessive perch or toy picking and withdrawal or aggression--in addition to the feather picking.

To be chosen for participation, each bird was lacking approximately 40% to 60% of his or her feather cover, picking for a minimum of six months (many to the point of drawing blood and diagnosed as self-mutilating) and non-responsive to prior allopathic nor naturopathic treatment.

With seventeen mature birds participating, ranging in age from 2 to 9, half the birds were small parrot-types, mostly Conures and African Greys, while the other half were Cockatiels and Budgerigars (budgies) on the same size-related pellet/seed diet, free of artificial ingredients and chemical preservatives. Each control group had a balance of types. All birds were given ten minutes of exercise and fresh air daily to aid in detoxification and nutrient utilization. No other topical support or veterinary medication was applied.

Before the beginning, and after the end of this experiment, an objective veterinary assessment was compiled for certain medical parameters: all the birds were photographed, confirmed on their weight, basic blood profiles, clinical absence of internal and external parasitic, fungal or viral infestation (to rule out this cause) and given a behavioral assessment regarding their particular environmental or behavioral triggers.

During the whole period of research, subjects caregivers kept a daily log that recorded how the subjects acted, slept, how stable was their appetites (acceptance of supplementation), the specific changes observed after so many days, including the overall condition of the birds and rapidity in feather growth. Each section was scored on a “1 to 10” rating and the score combined for the final analysis and percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

By far, at 87%, the birds both supplemented and given homeopathic support for emotional distress or obsessive behavior fared the best -- a total elimination of the symptoms -- with 25% of these birds showing improvement within the first week, 50% within the first three weeks and 75% by week four.

Subjects that were only supplemented came in a close second at 79% improvement, most within the first four weeks while the group on homeopathic support only responding with a poor response rate of only 43%, and had the lowest maintenance success other than the control group (once homeopathic remedies were no longer administered the symptoms returned within a few weeks).

Four birds in the control group actually got significantly worse with the fifth bird permanently damaging his body and suffering liver failure concluded to be of a chemical origin (from medications, both for tissue inflammation and a common tranquilizer, administered for months prior to the study).

Significant Observations

- Of the nine birds treated with veterinary medications prior to the study, six made the nutraceutical and/or homeopathic treatment protocol groups and ALL showed marked improvement over initial liver function readings and their noticeable declining condition. The three birds that made the control group -- one even taken off steroids for the duration of the study -- did not recover their health until they were placed on the naturopathic protocol. Of these, two birds still required medication, one owner choose to add the supplementation protocol after the conclusion of the study period, and the other did not. The supplemented bird showed a marked improvement in health and a decreased need for medication, while the other subject continued to struggle with the medication and required higher doses (not as effective), of which it could not tolerate! Even the vet tried to convince the owner to supplement, but failing this, lost the bird (still feather-less) to liver failure within sixteen months.
- Of the 13% in the nutraceutical and homeopathic group who needed additional support to reverse their behavior and symptom, an additional 25% responded better to Azmira[®]'s Calm & Relax[™] herbal extract while the rest benefited from Azmira[®]'s ImmunoStim'R[™]. Of these four birds, only one had little success in quickly stabilizing like the others, until it was discovered later that this bird was still subject to stressful teasing during the study period.
- Although Azmira[®]'s herbal extracts contain a small percentage of alcohol (used during processing, to help the herb's therapeutic properties enter the cell structure and as a natural preservative); a drop of extract mixed into a ½ teaspoon of applesauce, contains no more alcohol than is naturally occurring in many fruits, such as bananas, that birds enjoy. There were no significant negative changes on an enzymatic or protein level showed during analysis of the liver and kidneys in these subjects.
- Even when symptoms reappeared after disregarding the supplementation protocol, wellness and a reversal of symptoms would be quickly accomplished (regardless the length of time passed) by returning to the Mega Pet Daily[™]. More vivid colors were also noted in these cases.

- Significant improvement in overall feather condition was also maintained during normal periods of feather loss (i.e. molting season) despite previous observations that these birds lost excessive quills and down in the seasons prior to supplementation. Sheen was maintained.
- 100% of “supplemented” birds also showed improvement in socialization and learning skills!



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