

Parrotkeeping—How Do I Raise My Birds?

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Part 5 of 5 —Legislation and References

Legislation Affecting Animal Owners

All animal owners need to be aware of local, state, and federal legislation that may affect their rights to keep and/or breed animals. Particular throughout the last decade, a treacherous maze of such laws have proliferated, including animal limit and land use laws that can be used as a legal bludgeon to force an animal owner to give up some or all of their animals.

Unfortunately, because of trends initiated and continually propagated by “animal rights” groups (and those who buy into their misinformation and exaggeration), there are many anti-breeding groups whose agenda is to stop all breeding. Citizens may encounter them as local busybodies who try to pass their personal idea of pet care and breeding through onerous legislation; state legislators who are pressured by “animal rights” group lobbyists; and federal agencies who are mandated to enforce regulations which have been pushed through by special-interest “animal rights” groups.

Did I say “animal rights” enough times? That concept is very different from “animal welfare,” with which it is often confused—and that’s deliberate! When you are browsing web sites, look for “key words” that indicate a group *may* be anti-breeding, anti-pet owning—or very misguided and being used by “animal rights” fanatics. Concepts such as “guardian” instead of pet owner; “bird mills” to describe commercial operations; “living off the backs of animals” to vilify breeders; and “exotic animals are wild and should not be pets,” and the most current phrasing, “animal protection,” are all clues that the organization espousing these *may* have an anti-animal-owning/breeding agenda. And so you are not confused, a simple understanding of the ultimate goal of these “animal rights” fanatics is the elimination of animal use (including companion animals).

A couple of web sites that explain well the difference between “animal welfare” and “animal rights” are the following: <http://www.naiaonline.org> and www.americananimalwelfare.com.

A Few Q&A’s about FCA Avicultural Practices

How can you continue to breed and sell birds with the current companion animal

“overpopulation” problem? I believe the concept of pet “overpopulation” is overused in most cases—and that the term was coined and has been used liberally by the “animal rights” fanatics who wish to end companion animal ownership, instead of truly help animals. *What if the millions that huge “animal rights” organizations are given each year by misguided donors were REALLY put to use for the benefit of animals? What a positive difference they could make!*

Attitude problems affecting pet retention can usually be helped with education, but these problems have been magnified and exaggerated by groups who vilify breeders and want to end breeding of companion



animals in the next couple of decades. For the sake of humans, who need animals in their lives, I hope that the demand for and availability of good quality pets continues. Further education to enhance breeder and owner responsibilities is needed and can be refined over time—if we don't let the "animal rights fanatics" destroy our access to quality pets through egregious legislation.

Do you "rescue" birds? I believe the concept of "rescue" is also overused—and is another term liberally exploited by "animal rights fanatics." Certainly, there are cases of neglect and abuse, and there is a need for people to help when those circumstances arise—but those are the minority we hear about, because that's what makes the news.

Of the millions of pets that are sold in the U.S. each year, the overwhelming majority are in good homes. *Life happens*, and when possible, I encourage people to work through their situations and keep their pets, but that's not always the best option for them or the pets. However, there are many reasons for "re-homing" pets, which is the term I prefer (instead of "rescue"), because it doesn't have the emotional charge and is more realistic, in my opinion. I do help re-home birds, as do most breeders with whom I am acquainted. Although I do not usually take birds needing re-homing into my home for biosecurity reasons, I do help place them, and I refer people to organizations that I know will help them without browbeating them about being lousy owners because they are giving up a pet.

I never refer anyone to a sanctuary that "warehouses" birds under the philosophy that birds shouldn't be pets and therefore shouldn't be adopted to homes. I do not believe that is looking out for the best interests of the birds!

References—Recommended Reading

Following are a few books that have generally excellent information. They don't always agree with one another, so one must do a bit of "sifting" through information. Some are no longer in print but usually can be obtained from an avian specialty shop, Amazon.com, or eBay (avian publications).

"Good Bird!" and "The Bird Behavior Problem Solver" by Barbara Heidenreich

"Don't Shoot the Dog!" by Karen Pryor

"Clicker Training for Birds," by Barbara Johnson

"Guide to Companion Parrot Behavior" and "The Second Hand Parrot," by Mattie Sue Athan

"Why Does My Bird Do That?" by Julie Rach

"The Pleasure of Their Company" and "The Parrot in Health and Illness" by Bonnie Munro Doane

"Birds for Dummies," by Brian Speer, DVM, and Gina Spadafori

"The Complete Bird Owner's Handbook," by Gary Gallerstein, DVM

"The Conure Handbook," by Anne Watkins

"Bringing Up Positive Parrotlets," By Sherry Lucciola

"The Beginner's Guide to Ringneck Parakeets," by Theresa & Alan Jordan

"A Guide to Popular Conures," by Ray Dorge and Gail Sibley

"The Consumer's Guide to Feeding Birds," by Liz Palika

"Aviary Design & Construction," by D.W. Pearce

"Holistic Care for Birds," by David McCluggage, DVM and Pamela Higdon

"The Human Nature of Birds," by Theodore Xenophon Barber, PhD

"Parrots of the World," by Joseph Forshaw

"The Minds of Birds" by Alexander Skutch

