

# The Py Press Winter 2006/7



## PYRRHURA BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

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## President's Message

The holiday season is over and a new year has begun. I hope everyone is in swing with their breeding season and that this year will be a good one. As many of you know, I am planning a "semi-retirement" move to the countryside of Oklahoma by summer of this year. I'll be closer to my daughter and family, which will be a GOOD thing!

**Focus on Pyrrhura conures**—In Part 4 on breeding Pyrrhura conures, Mary Arunski has elaborated on her diet for the picta painted.

**Aviary Visitors?** John Del Rio has provided a helpful guide to procedures to follow if you allow visitors to your aviary, along with reasons why these protocols are valid. I have also outlined my general policies for non-bird-savvy aviary visitors.

**PBA member services**—Your officers are working on a re-make of the PBA web site so that it will be more user-friendly and professional in appearance, as well as more easily updated. Included also will be a refurbished logo!

**2007 Affiliations**—Your officers are recommending affiliation with the Avicultural Society of America (ASA). They are one of the oldest groups in America and have an active, vibrant membership with which to share breeding practices. ASA also has a legislative list which keeps up with the latest AR incursions against breeding and pet ownership.

**PBA officer elections**—Officer elections for 2007 are here. Please vote, and remember that your contributions to the PBA and networking with other members will help all of us succeed.

**Ongoing legislative issues**—Animal-related and, in many cases, anti-breeding legislation are ongoing issues—in the U.S. and elsewhere. Aviculturists and other animal industry individuals and groups are realizing they all need to come together to battle the bad AR-backed bills all over the country.

—Marcy Covault

## PBA Officers

The PBA Officers are here to serve the needs of the organization. If you have questions, concerns, ideas, or suggestions, please bring them to the list or to us for discussion. We

value every member's expertise and input, and we want to encourage teamwork and networking to further educating about and promoting the feathered jewels that are the Pyrrhura conures.

President	Marcy Covault	<a href="mailto:President@pyrrhurabreedersassociation.com">President@pyrrhurabreedersassociation.com</a>
Vice President	Joi West	<a href="mailto:Vicepresident@pyrrhurabreedersassociation.com">Vicepresident@pyrrhurabreedersassociation.com</a>
Treasurer	June DiCiocco	<a href="mailto:Treasurer@pyrrhurabreedersassociation.com">Treasurer@pyrrhurabreedersassociation.com</a>
Secretary	Kelli Eager	<a href="mailto:Secretary@pyrrhurabreedersassociation.com">Secretary@pyrrhurabreedersassociation.com</a>
Webmaster/Editor	OPEN	[Marcy Covault, interim]

## Treasurer's Report

### June DiCiocco

Beginning balance (November 9, 2006)	\$3,956.99
Revenue: Member dues	+120.18
Newsletter Expenses (printing and postage)	-138.30
Service charge	<u>-6.00</u>
Balance as of January 29, 2007	<u>\$3,932.87</u>

## Membership Report

### Kelli Eager

We are currently 39 members strong. We encourage each member to send along a sample newsletter and an application for membership with each bird sale.

We are working to make the PBA an organization that offers value to its members, in

the form of education, networking support for breeding issues(including legislative alerts that affect aviculturists), and Consortium oversight.

We welcome member input and comments, as well as volunteer efforts to help accomplish PBA's mission.

## Election of Officers for 2007

The Nominating Committee for officers—Kelli Eager, Elke Davis, and Deryl Davis—have presented their recommended slate, which include the following:

President – Marcy Covault  
Vice President – Joi West  
Secretary – Chris Kraum  
Treasurer – June DiCiocco

PBA ballots for voting are included in this newsletter, in case you have NOT already returned the ballot provided on the PBA members Yahoo Group site. Ballots must be received no later than February 28, 2007 to be counted.

## How Easy or Difficult is Breeding Pyrrhura Conures? Part 4

*Mary has had excellent success with breeding her picta painted, and I asked her to give more details on the diet she feeds. Following is her response.—Editor*

### My Picta Painted Diet for Breeding Success

#### Mary Arunski

Since I've been successful in breeding picta painteds, I've been asked if I feed my painteds any differently from other species. In a few words, lots of fruit. Here are some examples:

- ✓ Lots of apples and carrots, pears and bananas
- ✓ Oatmeal with baby bird food in it
- ✓ Wheat germ in the oatmeal sometimes because of the high Vitamin E content
- ✓ Dried papaya every day
- ✓ Raisins
- ✓ Oranges
- ✓ Watermelon and cantaloupe

Apples are the fruit they eat most. I cannot remember the last time I got to eat a whole apple myself!

I give my Painteds a lot of fresh or freshly defrosted foods every day.

Around breeding season, I give them also basically what they or I would feed their babies: Mush. I feel that giving them this baby food with oatmeal and wheat germ, and whatever else I feel like putting in it (sweet potatoes or peas out of a baby food jar maybe), gets them in the "family" mood.

I also make sure they have a big bowl of fresh water to splash around in each day. I find them soaking wet many times a day. They enjoy a good bath.

Calciboost is always in my cabinet and makes its way to the oatmeal and such.

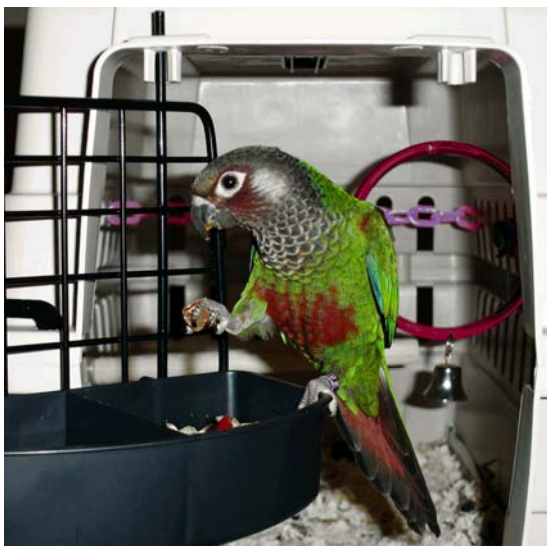
Scrambled eggs are shared by all my birds several times each week all year long.

The fresh and perishable foods need to be removed within an hour or two in hot weather so they do not spoil or mold.

Hanging wet romaine lettuce leaves from the top of their cage provides fun for the birds. They may eat it or they may rub their bodies around the wet leaves, or they may just tear the lettuce up for fun. No matter what they choose to do with it, I feel that a happy bird makes the best breeder.

My cages are a mess after all of the fresh foods, splashed water, and shredding of carrots and stuff. I consider this mess a sign that I am giving my birds things that nourish and entertain them rather than a problem. Some folks have clean cages all the time but very sad-looking birds. I go the extra mile to keep my babies stimulated and active.

As for breeding, I would much rather have a healthy, happy pet than a productive breeder. My experience has been that the happy pet becomes the best breeder anyway.



*Photo: This is one of my babies from 2006 getting ready for his flight from California to his permanent home in Ohio. His new owners named him Tinker. They say he really loved his travel cage and plays in it still. Here he is eating some dried papaya.*

# Visitor Etiquette in Aviaries

*Most of us struggle in deciding who gets to visit our aviaries—how do we screen them, and how do we help them understand what the limits of the visit are? John has provided some sound tips or “rules” that may help in educating visitors as to the visiting privilege we are allowing and the etiquette they should observe.—Editor*

## Visitor Etiquette in Aviaries

**John Del Rio**

In my 20 plus years of being keenly interested in exotic birds I have been very fortunate to be able to tour many different bird collections of all sizes and types and this continues to be a great joy for me. Most of these collections are not normally open to the public or are what you would describe as “tour friendly.” Here are a few words of advice from my perspective if any of you are fortunate enough to see an aviculturist's private collection and are new to this sort of thing:

1. EXPECTATIONS—Make it known to the aviary owner (whether they be someone you know or a new friend) that you don't expect to see all of the birds or get to go everywhere in their facility and you will be satisfied with whatever areas they choose to share with you. This takes the pressure off the owner to be able to comfortably tell you “no, we can't go into that area, let's go over here instead” or “I can't take you in there because I have got a bird on eggs,” etc. If you don't break that ice with the owner then you may end up getting your feelings hurt along the tour, or worse yet, the owner may hesitate to say no to you to spare your feelings and then you jeopardize the birds that shouldn't be bothered at that time.

2. PHOTOS—Ask permission to take photos before you whip out the camera. Make it clear to the owner that you do not want to be intrusive and you certainly do not want to take a photo of something that they may not want exposed. Ask them to tell you ahead of time if they want something avoided and by all means respect their wishes. There may even be certain

species that the owner will allow you to take photos of but because of security reasons will not want you sharing those photos with others. In those cases, you should keep the photos private.

3. BIOSECURITY—Expect to be asked to wash your shoes, step into a disinfectant bath or wear shoe covers. Don't take offense to being asked. In fact, it would be wise if you suggest the idea.

4. NOISE—Keep your voice down. Always keep the noise level to a minimum. I have a very loud and deep voice and this is always a struggle for me—especially when I am so excited to see a particular bird species. Ask the owner to tell you when it may be especially important to whisper in a certain area of the tour to keep from scaring a sensitive bird.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY—If the facility doesn't normally give tours and you were lucky enough to get one, keep that information close to your vest unless you know for a fact that the owner doesn't mind you sharing your experience with others. You would never want to ruin your chance of being invited back and you would never want to put the aviary owner in a bad position.

6. TIME—Show respect for the owner's time and don't linger too long unless invited to do so. It is always better to leave a little too soon than to be asked to leave because you stayed too long.

7. GRACIOUS—Be extremely grateful and thankful to the owner for the tour. Knowing all the risks and apprehension that aviculturists have regarding giving tours we need to really show how much we appreciate the opportunity to see the collection. It really is a gift from

them to you. A thank you card is a polite gesture.

8. REMEMBER—Once the privilege and hospitality has been extended to you to take a tour of a private aviary, it is your responsibility to remember the feelings of excitement you had to see those birds. Then, when one day someone politely asks to see your bird collection, you can return the kindness and give someone else a thrill.

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## Visiting Rules?

### Marcy Covault

In addition to aviculturists (experienced or beginners), perhaps it would be a good idea to have a set of rules and why they are important to give to non bird-savvy visitors (who may be potential customers) before we allow them to visit our aviaries.

When we are dealing with the public, it is important to be polite and positive, while educating others about aviary etiquette. The majority of people will respond well to rules when they understand the reasoning behind them. Those who don't are probably not people you want in your aviary anyway!

A few examples of my current policies are the following:

- ✓ I do not give tours of my aviary to the general public. It is on an individual basis at my discretion, and through setting up an appointment. No "drop-ins!" This is my home, not a store, and therefore there are no "store hours." You are a guest, and I am allowing a visit to help in your education and/or because you have expressed interest in a particular species I raise or a bird I have for sale.
- ✓ Do not visit pet stores or other aviaries BEFORE you come to mine, as I am concerned about inadvertent disease transmission. If you have birds, I ask that you wear clean clothes and not handle your

birds before you come to visit. I will ask you to sanitize your hands before you touch any of my birds.

- ✓ Hats or caps should be removed before entering my home. My birds are startled by them because they don't see them regularly. Do not wear bright colored clothing, as some birds react negatively to that. Remember that you are hundreds of times larger than a bird, and a bright red (for example) stranger coming towards them can be alarming and trigger the prey-flight response.
- ✓ Speak softly and move slowly around the birds. You are a giant stranger to them, and as prey animals, their natural instinct is to be wary, no matter how tame they are. Birds in a pet store typically are more used to strangers, but in a home, they likely are not.
- ✓ Keep children under your control at all times. Children are still much larger than the birds, and quick movements and loud talk can cause a flight response in the birds. Even a child's stuffed animal may startle a bird, so holding it up to them, even as a friendly gesture, is not a good idea.
- ✓ Do not let children put fingers in cages. Although the birds are more likely to move away from them, an occasional individual may view the finger as an aggressive incursion into their territory and bite it. It would be a shame for a child to have a traumatic experience before they understood the wonder of birds.
- ✓ It is likely that part of my aviary will be off-limits. For example, most of my breeding pairs are not "pets," so they do not like strangers in their area. I am considerate of their welfare more than I am interested in satisfying curiosity. However, I will be glad to answer questions you may have.



# Wild Parrot Diet and Toxins

*I have attended almost every Parrot Festival since it started (put on by the National Parrot Rescue and Preservation Foundation, aka NPRPF, Houston, TX). They have a variety of speakers, from conservationists and behaviorists to breeders and "rescue" specialists. So far, NPRPF has balanced interests well, and they value breeder contributions to their organization and conference. —Editor*

## A Review of Presentations at Parrot Festival 2007

**By Angela Cancilla Herschel**

I just got back from Parrot Festival 2007, and it was fantastic. The lineup of speakers was amazing, and I have learned so much my head hurts. There was so much to learn and learn we all did!

**Wild Parrot Diet and Toxins**—Dr. Don Brightsmith shared the information of the ongoing research of the diet study. He noted that the scarlet macaws in Peru ate the soil (copa) from the Tambopata clay licks with a high sodium content in the licks, and that the soil other than the licks in the Tambopata area and near parts of South America have very low to no sodium content in the soil. It was also interesting that they fed their babies less and less soil as they got older. Plants don't need sodium and, unlike animals, are able to live without salt with no problem.

Dr. Brightsmith said that in Central America (e.g., Costa Rica) where the scarlets do the opposite and do NOT eat copa (soil), the soil is so loaded with sodium (salt) that it would be competing with a Big Mac in a salt contest! He also showed photos of the crop contents of the baby scarlet macaws, and they were high in roughage, with bits of bark, very much like an adult diet! He speculated that maybe they need a diet with roughage more than we thought. He suggested that we think how we might be doing if we were eating baby food—the digestive problems we might have with no roughage.

Dr. Brightsmith's charts showed that the baby birds in the beginning days were much heavier than the bird chicks of the same age born in captivity, and it was not until later on that the curve changed and that the captive birds became the ones that were heavier. He also said that although they are not certain, they do not see evidence that the wild chicks lose weight at the time of fledging like handfed baby

parrots do in captivity. He said that the diets in the wild birds studied also had lower zinc and potassium and higher calcium and magnesium than what is recommended by vets and in pellets.

From Dr. Brightsmith's report:

*"Our previous research has provided great insight in to the general characteristics of macaw and parrot diets. It has aided us in understanding why birds eat soil and pointed out some gross differences between diets for captive and wild chicks. However, these analyses are too rough to use to formulate new diets for captive birds. To provide the information we need to truly understand the nutrient balance of wild diets, we need to know more than just the gross levels of fat, protein, etc. We need to know details about essential amino acids, essential fatty acids, vitamins, and even carotenoids (precursors of vitamin A). Lack of such detailed knowledge has led to the formulation of diets that can actually harm birds. For example Lories fed some commercial diets may suffer from Vitamin A toxicity, reproductive failure, poor health and even iron storage disease. This is due, in part, to the fact that in the wild, the birds consume mostly provitamin A carotenoids which they use to make only the amount of Vitamin A they need (McDonald 2003)."*

*[Ed. Note—The full report in PDF format will be posted on the PBA Members Yahoo Group site.]*

**Hand Transmission of Contamination**—Dr. Natalie Antinoff was also a speaker, and she said that what we should be more worried about than toxins in their diet is disease, and that we should wash our hands before handling our birds. As an example, she said that rescue birds that were handled hardly at all had less staph on them than pet parrots that were handled all the time.

## Songs for a Pioneer

**Roger Welsch**, *Condensed from Audubon (Nov-Dec 1992), Courtesy of Nature's Corner Magazine, [http://www.naturescornermagazine.com/NaturesBlog/archives/2007/01/songs\\_for\\_a\\_pio.html](http://www.naturescornermagazine.com/NaturesBlog/archives/2007/01/songs_for_a_pio.html)*

For early settlers on the Great Plains, life was incredibly hard. They were so far from even the nearest neighbor, they had to endure extremes of heat and cold, wind and blizzards, snakes and plagues of grasshoppers.

But the worst agony of all, recorded in diaries and journals, was the silence. There was no rush of water over the rocks and falls, no distant ring of church bells or laughter of the neighbors' children, no creak of a mill, no clang of a village anvil. Fires started by lightning eliminated what trees there were, so there was no familiar call of the cicada or katydid, no rustle of autumn leaves. And there were few birds: no cardinals, no robins, no orioles, no owls, no thrushes, no siskins or wood ducks. How horrible life must have been without those flashes of color and bursts of song!

The emptiness of the frontier was hardest on the women, because the 19th-century convention was that men conducted the family's commerce – going to town for supplies, getting the mail, delivering produce - while women stayed home on the bleak, isolated plains.

As a folklorist, I once researched the frontier architecture of the Great Plains. I focused on the sod house, built of layers of turf scraped from the native prairie. It was the only material available to pioneers on a land where no trees for lumber, no fuel to fire brick, and little stone suitable for a building. In examining nearly 1200 photographs of sod houses, I was struck by a curious oddity: dozens of the photograph's showed caged canaries.

Hanging under the eaves and porches of the primitive sod huts, the cages seemed jarringly

inappropriate. Canaries were too dainty and fragile for the raw and violent environment.

I wondered about those gentle birds in the oppressive, dark closeness of the sod house or the glaring heat of the Nebraska summer or the inescapable cold of a plains winter. Why would anyone have a canary, of all things on the frontier?



I suspected the birds were there precisely because of their fragility and vulnerability. They were reminders of the innocence, elegance, beauty, color and song left behind in Denmark, New York or even Illinois. But that was only my speculation.

A few years later, I was speaking to a group of farm families about plains pioneer life. Mentioning the sod-house photographs and the canaries. I ventured what the

canaries might have meant to those who kept them.

After my presentation, an elderly woman came to me in tears and said my theory about canaries explained a puzzle that had bewildered her for years. Her Czech grandparents had been sodbusters in Nebraska. They filed a claim on an 80-acre homestead, developed a successful farm, raised a family, and counted the growing number of grandchildren and great grandchildren at Christmas and Fourth of July gatherings.

Eventually the couple grew too old to farm. They auctioned off everything they couldn't use, packed a wagon with what they did need, and moved to a retirement home.

Then the husband died, and the widow again refined her possessions so that now she had

only the most precious objects of her life. A grocery sack easily held them all.

She died a couple of years later, and the task of sorting through the final artifacts of this pioneer's life fell to one of her granddaughters, the woman who was talking to me that evening. She told me she had been swept with emotion as she looked at the valuables - a woman's life distilled to the very essence of what that life meant. There were a few photographs, her wedding ring, her immigration certificate, newspaper clippings about her son's distinguished service during World War II and some school drawings from her grandchildren.

And there was a small wooden box, which the woman had never seen before. She was uneasy as she slid open the cover. Inside she found the small dry, weightless body of a canary - a canary that had been dead a long, long time.

It made no sense at all. The value of everything else was clear, but this dead canary - what could it possibly mean? Why, she wondered, had her family's matriarch kept a dead bird through the various stages of paring down her belongings?

Now she knew, because she also had photographs of the family's first sod house, standing in the middle of nowhere, desolate, storm swept, shameless, comfortless, soulless. And there, hanging under a pathetic shelter porch, could be seen in faint outlines of a fragile cage and the shadow of an even more fragile canary on its perch.

The talisman in the wooden box was not just a dead bird. It had probably been that pioneer woman's salvation, an anchor of sanity for the Bohemian girl stranded in America's wilderness. Its trill had been her only music, its feathers the only color in her life. What had the Czech farm girl thousands of miles from her homeland told this little bird in her moments of despair and joy? What had it told her?

Since my conversations with that woman's granddaughter, I have never been able to think of birds in quite the same way. I wonder about other gifts these wonderful creatures bring to our lives every day and how empty life would be without them, even today, a century and a half away from the sod-house frontier.

## Animal Legislation in Australia

**Mike Owen, [mowen@internode.on.net](mailto:mowen@internode.on.net), <http://www.mooloolabapets.com.au>**

*Mike is an experienced aviculturist in Queensland, Australia, and has written many articles on birdkeeping on that continent [see <http://www.birdsnways.com/mowen/>]. Currently under discussion in Australia is a proposed federal law that appears extreme for exotics in the country.*

Our Australian federal government is currently proposing to introduce a fairly draconian control system for virtually all exotic species in Australia. It would have a significant effect on aviculture here, and on pet shops, and I have drafted a submission from the Australian pet industry peak body arguing against the proposals.

One of the arguments they have used to introduce a scheme is the potential for exotic birds to escape from aviaries and become a feral pest in the environment. In Australia,

unlike the USA and Europe, there has been no importation of wild caught birds since about 1950, and hence all our exotic birds are many generations removed from the wild, and have lost much of their instinctive and learnt defence mechanisms against predators and other dangers that they face in the wild.

I included an argument that wild birds, especially parrots, learn many of their survival skills from their parents before becoming independent, and that captive-bred birds do not have the need or opportunity to acquire these



skills and hence have little chance of survival in the wild if they escape from the aviary. It is a common-sense line of argument, borne out by the lack of feral populations of exotic species in Australia, apart from those deliberately introduced in colonial times by homesick English gentry!

However, to give weight to the argument, I referred to published work supporting the idea that survival skills of parrots in particular are acquired, as opposed to being instinctive behaviours.

The following three references support my argument.

Wallace, M.P., 1994, Control of behavioral development in the context of reintroduction programs for birds. *Zoo Biology* vol.13/5, 491-499

Noel F.R., Snyder, S.E., Koenig, Koschmann, J., Snyder, H.S., Johnson, J.B., 1994, Thick-Billed Parrot Releases in Arizona. *Condor*, Vol. 96/4, 845-862

Welle, K.R., 2000, Incorporating Behavior Services into the Avian Practice. *Journal of Avian Medicine and Surgery*, Vol 14/3, 190-193

## The National ID (NAIS) Is NOT Dead

*The USDA has embarked on a marketing campaign to make it appear as if NAIS is dead or voluntary. Nothing could be further from the truth, as the USDA is working to close the gates on any possible opposition. Below is an analysis of the USDA's November 22nd press release by the esteemed Dr. Mary Zanoni, one of the leaders opposing NAIS, which refutes the USDA's latest spin - the NAIS User Guide of November 2006. Copyright 2006 by Mary Zanoni. The following article may be distributed solely for personal and non-commercial use without prior permission from the author. Non-commercial distribution and posting to assist in disseminating information about NAIS is, in fact, encouraged, so long as proper credit is given and the article is reproduced without changes or deletions. Any other distribution or republication requires the author's permission in writing and requests for such permission should be directed to the author at the address/phone/e-mail address below.*

### **A Preliminary Analysis of the USDA's NAIS User Guide of November 2006**

By Mary Zanoni, PhD, JD  
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The following are preliminary points meant to contribute to the early and continuing discussion of this newly released (as of November 22, 2006) USDA document concerning the National Animal Identification System. I plan to write further on some of the key issues related to the User Guide in the near future. At the close of the discussion is a list of suggestions for further action.

1. The only real "difference" from this year's prior Implementation Plan documents is the absence of stated dates for certain target levels of participation. The document still envisions making everyone comply with NAIS eventually. (See, e.g., User Guide, p. 5, "The goal is to

establish a complete record of all locations, or premises, in the United States that manage or hold livestock and/or poultry." (Emphasis added.)

2. Note that Rep. Collin Peterson (D. Minnesota, 7th Dist.), expected to chair the House Agriculture Committee in the next Congress beginning in January 2007, lately has been quoted as favoring a "mandatory" NAIS. (Presumably Rep. Peterson does not yet understand the harms NAIS will cause to small farmers and animal owners, and the unfair boon it will be to the multinational meat industry and tech industry. Let's help him realize the true state of affairs by contacting his office and pointing out the harms of NAIS.)

The USDA's increased (but misleading) emphasis on "voluntary" may well be nothing more than an attempt to shift blame to Rep. Peterson and some of his fellow party members

for a “mandatory” plan that the present administration’s USDA really hopes will be implemented.

3. Note that the User Guide was released late in the day on Thanksgiving eve. This is a typical tactic for actions that bureaucrats hope might escape too much notice. Further, unlike the release of the Implementation Plan of April 2006, the release of the User Guide was not accompanied by a well-publicized news conference by Secretary Johanns.

4. The User Guide subtly reveals some new tactics the USDA is planning to employ for imposing “creeping mandatory” NAIS on animal owners who do not actually “volunteer.” Note the following passage from p. 8 of the Guide:

“USDA believes participation in the main components of NAIS can occur as a result of standard business practices. For example, in order for producers to obtain official identification devices, they first need to register for a premises identification number. Accordingly, the success of the premises registration component would be achieved through the participation of producers in longstanding disease management programs and compliance with interstate movement regulations.”

Translation of the above bureaucratic verbiage: If you want to buy, sell, or move animals in interstate transactions, or if you participate in a required (e.g., for many dairy producers) or voluntary disease program such as TB or brucellosis testing or calfhood vaccination, the USDA is going to force you to use NAIS Animal Identification Numbers (AINs) for these programs, and will also force you to get a premises ID as a prerequisite to getting the forced AINs.

5. The USDA propaganda machine really went into high gear to produce the User Guide. The main propaganda objective is falsely to paint any NAIS non-participants as somehow “antisocial.”

Of course, the real facts are that people opposed to NAIS base their opposition on their positive religious, spiritual, social, and ethical

values, and they want to create a more just world for all. NAIS opponents want a local, human-scaled economy that supports true family farming, offers fair compensation for producing food and other basic needs, and discourages greed, excessive commercialism, and materialism. In contrast, the pushers of NAIS — originally multinational meatpackers and tech corporations — are driven by greed for undeserved profit and power. In particular, the tech corporations will happily microchip your grandmother or your baby if they think they can make a buck doing it — these corporations absolutely do not care about the obviously negative spiritual, social, and political consequences of their behavior.

The USDA User Guide attempts to turn these true values of things upside down. Consider the following statement from the Guide (p. 2):

“There are a number of reasons for producers to participate in NAIS. One of the most important reasons is to better protect animal health. People who own or work with animals, or depend on them for income, understand how absolutely important this is — for themselves, their neighbors, and their surrounding communities.”

Thus the USDA spinmeisters falsely paint NAIS opponents — who in reality are religiously and socially dedicated people sacrificing their own time and money to promote a better future for all people, all animals, all of creation and nature — the USDA falsely paints these dedicated people as somehow not sufficiently attentive to “neighbors” and “communities.”

Curiously, the USDA never seems to have anything bad to say about the CAFOs and CAFO-dependent multinational meatpackers who pollute our air and water, create dangerous resistant bacteria by overuse of antibiotics, squander immense amounts of fossil fuels to produce and transport their products, treat animals like fungible “units of production” to be kept in total confinement, pay displaced foreign workers substandard wages, and drive family farmers and small local entrepreneurs out of business.

## ***Suggested Actions***

The issuance of the User Guide should not change the planned actions of NAIS opponents; rather, the Guide's misleading propaganda should inspire NAIS opponents to continue their socially responsible work.

- ✓ Do not rely on expressing your opinions to NAIS Working Groups or other "insiders" such as extension agents or government animal-health workers. Instead, make your opposition to NAIS known where it counts — to your U.S. Congressman and U.S. Senator and to state senators and representatives.
- ✓ Seek an end to all federal funding of NAIS. Good organizations to support in this regard are the National Independent Consumer and Farmer Advocates Fund (NICFA) and the Virginia Independent Consumers and Farmers Association (VICFA) — check them out at [www.vicfa.net](http://www.vicfa.net).
- ✓ Work for state legislation to prohibit acceptance of USDA NAIS funds by state agriculture and animal health departments, and legislation prohibiting state involvement in premises ID/animal ID/animal tracking.
- ✓ Demand animal products produced without participation in NAIS.
- ✓ Avoid purchasing industrially-produced animal products and encourage others to boycott such foods.
- ✓ Obviously, do not sign up for any "voluntary" aspects of NAIS. Avoid any actions that might trigger "forced voluntary" NAIS, such as need for interstate shipping permits or participation in "voluntary" government-sponsored animal-related programs.
- ✓ Avoid attending any animal-related fairs or shows that require NAIS premises ID or animal ID. Instead, arrange your own animal-related events with trusted neighbors or friends.
- ✓ Oppose any attempts by the USDA or state agriculture departments to obtain statutory exemptions from freedom-of-information laws for NAIS information. Remember, bureaucrats will be unable to implement NAIS if they cannot get FOIA exemptions for their databases.
- ✓ Work to repeal the already-mandatory premises ID in Wisconsin and Indiana, and the soon-to-be-mandatory RFID tagging for cattle in Michigan. Help your friends and family from these states to relocate, if necessary.
- ✓ Refuse to buy any land that has a premises ID or any animals that have NAIS animal identification numbers.

## **Birds in Science**

### **Genetically Engineered Chickens Lay Golden Eggs**

*Posted on: January 30, 2007 7:45 PM, by "GrrlScientist"*

Like bacteria, various farm animals have been cloned to produce a variety of protein drugs that benefit humans. These protein drugs can counteract medical conditions such as anemia and diabetes and even some cancers. However, these cloned animals are expensive, large, and most take years before they can produce these desired protein drugs in sufficient commercially-viable quantities.

However, some researchers have decided that chickens can be desirable protein drug factories because they are small, inexpensive and have rapid generation times. Further, chickens could produce neat packages—eggs—that are loaded with these desired protein drugs.

*[FULL ARTICLE at [http://scienceblogs.com/grrlscientist/2007/01/genetically\\_engineered\\_chicken.php](http://scienceblogs.com/grrlscientist/2007/01/genetically_engineered_chicken.php)]*

# This Aviculturist's Response to "Animal Rights Fanatics" Propaganda

**Marcy Covault**

It has ALWAYS been true in society that extremists develop a following among normally sensible people through an emotional hook that leaves common sense behind. For the "animal rights fanatics" (ARFs), the barrage of animal-directed laws is NOT about animal welfare, it is about PUNISHMENT for those breeding or "using" animals, in any way, shape, or form. That punishment is intended to be so painful that we give up our animal-using ways.

As aviculturists, we cannot barricade ourselves behind symbolic or actual barriers and expect to survive the onslaughts. We also cannot go head-to-head using the ARF tactics, as that makes us appear to stoop to their level of insanity. The true ARFs have positioned themselves with their talons in the tender flesh of animal lovers who believe in "animal welfare" and who have been brainwashed to believe in the ARF propaganda. We must be careful how we remove the ARF hooks, lest we cause additional bloody pain.

Should everyone have a pet or a child? Obviously not, but I believe MOST people do benefit from a relationship with a companion animal, and their choice to do that is as sacred as our right to exist on this earth. What bothers me the most about the ARF's main goal is their desire to sever the human/animal relationship. Without companion animals, we would lose an important part of our humanity towards other humans. Children often learn about nurturing through their pets—why on earth would anyone want to eliminate that? I can only conclude that those who are at the forefront of the ARF movement have something wrong with their psyches, some inability to understand the mutual value of nurturing and caring for creatures that depend on us.

As I've told many people, my birds keep me "grounded" in both sanity and loving exchange. They remind me daily of what a bond there can be between creatures, and they are my refuge from a world that sometimes seems hostile and self-destructive. Do I want to share my "bird" experiences with others? Absolutely! To see my youngsters go to homes where they are appreciated and loved gives positive reinforcement to what I am doing. I always encourage people to keep in touch and send me stories and pictures—and if they are having problems, to ask for help.

I stand up for myself and say what I think about a controversial issue, but I try very hard to control my emotional response and not appear too negative—and not to personally attack or name-call individuals, in particular. Emotional outbursts will not budge those with closed minds—all it will do is confirm to them the existence of "us" (good guys) vs. "them" (bad or irrational guys) in their worldview. Does that mean I won't defend myself and will "turn the other cheek" if confronted by those who would invade my home and steal my animals? NO! The "mother bear" side of me would come out in a heartbeat.

Those of us who are owners/breeders/stewards of our animals need to reclaim our power through explaining our love of our animals and how we want the best for them—and that best doesn't mean "better dead than in a cage" or "better dead than bred," as the ARFs have so often chanted. That is barbaric and insane! I don't have a single animal that would choose death over a pampered domesticated existence—nor would my animals choose to roll the dice on making it in Mother Nature's harsh world of survival-of-the-fittest, particularly in today's world of habitat alteration and

destruction. AND I won't choose that for them, nor will I let anyone else choose that for them. We NEED our passion, our love for our animals, our "mother bear" protection of our animals—but we also need the ability to reason and communicate, which has thus far kept our civilization from crumbling.

I know it's HARD not to reply in kind when verbally attacked, but I believe we must try to be educators rather than defensive snarlers and snappers. Those who are "on the fence," or who are bothered by the breeder-bashing, will be equally \*turned off\* when breeders defend themselves by name-calling and yelling (e.g., in a message) at those who believe differently. I'm not saying that we don't defend ourselves (as breeders), because we must do that or be trampled by the vocal "righteous" ARF minority, who would impose their beliefs on everyone. As individuals, we each have to decide on our own responses, but we are also responsible for our actions (including words) that may provide ammunition for the ARFs.

The more we can show by positive means how we care for our birds—through stories and educational exchanges, for example—I feel that the more the public will be "breeder friendly" and see ARF chants as irrational rantings.

Granted, some people just repeat those bizarre chants because they want to be passionate about a "cause," and they are basically brainwashed by the appeal to emotions that is cleverly used by those pushing the ARF agenda (e.g., PETA's overt actions and declarations). We can awaken some of those people, but some will not return to common sense—and we have to accept that and neutralize their misconceptions and actions where we can.

Because most people love animals in one way or another, I believe the majority of people would welcome a loving approach to "animal welfare," rather than the militant, ham-fisted punitive approach behind all these AR-created and backed bills that continue to pop up all over

the country under the guise of "animal welfare," or the now politically correct "animal protection," as groups such as Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) are now claiming. We need to continue to point out how a seemingly "problem-solving" bill, for example, carries unintended consequences because of the wording which goes beyond solving a problem and rather seeks to control animal-owners in ways that truly are not in the animals' best interest.

Can we, as aviculturists, reach the majority of people? Can we make a positive difference in the public attitude towards bird breeders? If we are to continue, we must, and the choice and the responsibility are ultimately ours.

However, we are NOT ALONE! Pet owners are waking up too. There is a web site that is developing to wake pet owners up to the ARF threat and to unify the majority against a vocal and perverse ARF minority. Check out:  
<http://www.animaltalknaturally.com/2007/01/13/animal-ambassadors-emerging-to-shed-light-on-anti-pet-laws/>

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Following is an excerpt from an article that doesn't mince words, but that nevertheless is positive in tone [FULL ARTICLE AT <http://www.huntingtonnews.net/columns/070128-bloomer-comment.html>]:

## **COMMENTARY: Light Banishes Darkness**

*Kim Bloomer*

Darkness has crept into the world of animals and animal protection over the years, with 2007 shaping up to be the darkest yet. Those of us who love our animals and want to continue to live with them in companionship (rather than banish them to a "gaze upon at a distance place," as the animal rights movement would have us do), are experiencing a rude awakening to the true dark agenda of this movement.

.....



We don't fight tactic against tactic but rather face the darkness with light. A friend, Ron Hevener (author/artist/breeder), said "Be the change you want to see." Mahatma Gandhi said something similar. BE light. We've been trying to fight this all wrong. We are the TRUE voice for the animals. We've been moping in the animal rights darkness, covering in fear at all these ridiculous ordinances passing. That is one reason they are winning.

Money isn't a problem because with millions of pet lovers who want to continue to own and

love their pets in this country, and billions of dollars spent in the pet industry, it stands to reason we ARE the ones who call the shots. We've just been listening to too much rhetoric and propaganda. Light banishes darkness. Banishes it! When it is dark outside things can seem scary with dangers lurking in every corner. But when the sun comes up, the fear vanishes because we can see clearly.

I'll leave you with this thought: when you flip on a light in a roach-infested room, they scatter like the scum they are. We can do likewise and we ARE the "sun come up."

## Rare Pyrrhura



*Thanks to June DiCiocco for providing the link to this rare Pyrrhura.*

[http://www.proaves.org/article.php?id\\_article=255](http://www.proaves.org/article.php?id_article=255)

### **Santa Marta Parakeet *Pyrrhura viridicata* occupies its first nest-box**

The Santa Marta Parakeet (*Pyrrhura viridicata*) occupied its first nest-box, which was installed in a Wax Palm (*Ceroxylon ceriferum*) 20 feet above the ground in an open cattle-grazing area adjacent to the reserve.

The box was occupied by four individuals (presumably two pairs) which guarded the nest, two chicks hatched four days ago and there are still two eggs left. Our field staff were surprised at such a quick use of the nest-box, having believed that the breeding season had finished in April/May when several groups of juveniles were recorded in the foraging areas.

In May we installed 48 artificial nest-boxes at the El Dorado Nature Reserve in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

Thank you to the support of American Bird conservancy, Loro Parque Foundation and International Conure Association.



# Avian Flu: Your Questions Answered

## Consumer Reports

[http://www.consumerreports.org/mg/free-highlights/cr-health-alerts/safety-alert/avian\\_flu.htm](http://www.consumerreports.org/mg/free-highlights/cr-health-alerts/safety-alert/avian_flu.htm)

The possibility of a worldwide pandemic of deadly avian flu has generated an alarming array of rumors, inflated fears, and false claims. Here are answers to some of the most pressing questions about the true nature of the threat and what you can do to protect yourself and your family.

### 1) Why is bird flu potentially so dangerous?

This virus, called influenza A (H5N1), is unusually virulent and so new that people around the world have had no chance to develop immunity. It has killed about half of the small number of people known to be affected so far, and the virus is running rampant among birds across an expanding range of the world, putting more and more people at risk of infection.

### 2) How do people become infected?

Chickens and other domestic or wild birds infected with bird influenza shed the virus in their saliva, nasal secretions, and feces. Nearly all of the reported human cases have involved contact with infected birds: butchering or plucking chickens, eating undercooked poultry, or spending time in areas contaminated with the blood or droppings of birds, particularly sick or dying chickens. Experts fear that the evolving virus will gain the ability to spread easily from person to person, for instance, by swapping genes with a human flu virus. So far, the risk of transmission from patients to other people has been low. The virus has not been known to spread beyond a patient's close contacts, including the clusters of cases in Sumatra among family members. In those cases, researchers tested the genetic sequences of virus samples and found no evidence of the feared mutations.

### 3) How can I tell whether I have regular flu or bird flu?

Your chance of contracting the H5N1 virus is currently almost nonexistent unless you've been near sick birds or have eaten undercooked poultry in regions afflicted by the virus. That said, here's how avian flu differs from seasonal flu: While both generally cause high fever and coughing, bird flu does not usually produce the runny nose, inflamed sinuses, or upper-respiratory congestion typical of seasonal flu. Instead, the sickness often advances rapidly to pneumonia, which is the most common cause of death.

### 4) How would a pandemic start?

The virus first needs to gain the ability to spread easily from person to person. The initial signs might be an outbreak among caregivers at a hospital or a cluster of cases not linked to contact with birds. Testing virus samples for significant mutations or recombination with human influenza strains could provide advance warning. In theory, health authorities should be able to contain a localized outbreak by isolating sick people and treating those who've been exposed with anti-viral drugs. If that strategy fails, the virus will spread, possibly to other countries or even worldwide. At that point, attention will shift to rapid development and distribution of a vaccine, the supplying of anti-flu medication to affected areas, and other broad public-health measures.

*See the rest of the discussion at the web site listed.*

*See also Dr. Sherri Tenpenny's 10-point analysis of the bird flu hype, "Eliminating Bird Flu Fears," at <http://www.newswithviews.com/Tenpenny/sherri4.htm>*

# PBA: Preserving Birds through Aviculture

## PBA Mission Statement

1. To bring together people interested in the keeping and breeding of Pyrrhura Conures.
2. To enhance those interests, through mutual education.
3. To provide a background in keeping of all the species and sub-species.
4. To encourage the domestic breeding of all species and sub-species.
5. To provide a networking studbook on the uncommon and rarer species.

## In addition, according to PBA Bylaws, the organization's purpose is to

- ✓ create a cooperative spirit and feeling among the various bird owners and breeders and to enhance our common bond;
- ✓ educate the public, pet owners, and breeders in good avicultural practices;
- ✓ promote better caged bird care and husbandry;
- ✓ promote the conservation and preservation of Pyrrhura Conures through captive breeding of common, uncommon, rare, or endangered species and sub-species;
- ✓ assist each member in solving of any problems that may arise in the pursuit of aviculture; and
- ✓ keep the members informed of local, state, and national legislation which impacts aviculture.



## PYRRHURA BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

c/o Kelli Eager, Secretary  
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Burleson, TX 76028

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**