

# Dry Feather Treatment Plan

Carlingford Animal Hospital

Two main factors must be considered when treating birds with dry feather problems. Firstly, it is necessary to investigate and understand the fundamental cause of dry feathers. Secondly, the irritation caused by dry feather damage must be halted before it progresses to the more serious problem of feather destruction behaviour.

Digestive disorders are the most common cause of dry feathers. There are other conditions that may also cause dry feathers. Microscopic dropping examination, culture tests, barium meal X-rays and blood biochemistry are required to diagnose the exact cause(s). A correct diagnosis is necessary to successfully treat your bird and find permanent relief from the dry feather problem. The first step however is to address the irritation caused by dry feathers. This is an urgent need because the extreme discomfort of dirty and/or damaged feathers may suddenly escalate and trigger an episode of feather destruction behaviour. Plume Mist has been developed to address this need (see Plume Mist brochure)

## STEP 1: Remove Broken Feathers

Remove or trim back any broken feathers that may trigger an episode of feather destruction behaviour.

## STEP 2: Stimulate Daily Bathing to Relieve Discomfort

The primary goal of bathing is to calm the bird and relieve the discomfort caused by dirty unkempt feathers in order to prevent further damage that may trigger an episode of feather destruction. Mist spray daily with Plume Mist. Plume Mist lubricates the dry feathers and produces a rapid return of flexibility that protects against breakage and the possibility of feather destruction behaviour. Plume Mist sprays are continued until healthy preening activity returns and all signs of feather discomfort have disappeared.

### Encouraging Daily Bathing

Birds that are not perfectly well may not freely seek a bath. Therefore, the bird may need to be encouraged to bath. Warming the room to 26-28°C will help encourage bathing. Bathing activity may also be stimulated by taking a warm shower with your bird. Birds will also instinctually look to bathe in response to the noise of a vacuum cleaner or similar device that mimics the sound of rain. The bathing vessel should be a concave shallow dish with rounded edges. For small birds this can be placed on the floor of the cage. For larger birds, the bathing vessel should be placed high up in the cage adjacent to the roosting area/perch. If bathing activity cannot be stimulated, the bird may be encouraged to shower.

### Establishing a Bathing Routine

The bird will look to bath when the crop is almost empty about 3-4 hours after the morning meal. It is best to organise the morning meal so that bathing occurs late morning. This bathing routine allows the feathers to dry during the warmer part of the day and will promote mid-afternoon preening behaviour. A bird is more likely to bath at the opportune time when it has an established daily morning and evening meal time routine. This feeding schedule provides the conditions - temperature, digestive comfort and leisure time - that promote a healthy bathing routine.

Not all parrots will want to bathe or shower daily. Dr Marshall will advise the best bathing frequency for your species of bird.

## Healthy Feeding & Bathing Routine

### MORNING MEAL

A cooked morning meal is given soon after first light when your bird will eat its full. This helps to release digestive enzymes and promotes healthy digestion.



### IDEAL BATHING TIME

By late morning the temperature has warmed and the crop will be almost emptied of the morning meal. This is the time your bird is likely to bath.

### MIDDAY FORAGING

Seed (fortified with Turbobooster, E-Powder and F-Vite) and millet sprays are provided throughout the day as foraging opportunities.



### AFTERNOON PREENING

Preening follows a bath, which clean the feathers, and at a time when the feathers are completely dry. Preening usually occurs during the afternoon when your bird is relaxed and not distracted by household movements.

### EVENING MEAL

## STEP 3: Diagnose & Resolve Underlying Health Issues

Underlying health problems must be properly diagnosed and resolved in order to prevent recurrent dry feather problems and to eliminate the possibility of feather destruction behaviour. Please refer the relevant information sheet regarding the underlying cause(s) of dry feather in your bird.

### Immediate Treatment Plan

- Stimulate bathing and begin healthy feeding and bathing routine overpage

#### Underlying Health Issues

- Inadequate bathing  
 Digestive disturbance  
 Gizzard dysfunction  
 Male hypersexual behaviour  
 Female hormonal disorder  
 Heavy metal poisoning  
 Bacterial toxin  
 Fungal toxin  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### Optional Medication

#### In Drinking Water

#### On Sterile Seed

Day 1	*Medications are mixed with drinking water supplements	Quik Gel & Hi-Cal <sup>1</sup>	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite <sup>2</sup>
Day 2		Quik Gel & Hi-Cal <sup>1</sup>	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite <sup>2</sup>
Day 3		Quik Gel & Hi-Cal <sup>1</sup>	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite <sup>2</sup>
Day 4		Quik Gel & Hi-Cal <sup>1</sup>	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite <sup>2</sup>
Day 5		Quik Gel & Hi-Cal <sup>1</sup>	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mix 1 drop Quik Gel & 1ml Hi-Cal thoroughly into 100ml drinking water. May also be given with fruit, vegetables or nectar.

<sup>2</sup> To 100gm of sterile millet mix add 10 drops of Turbobooster and mix thoroughly. Then, add 1gm (white spoon) each of E-Powder and F-Vite and mix again so that these powders stick to the Turbobooster oil impregnated seed.

## STEP 4: Dietary Modification to Promote Feather Health

Review and modification of the diet is necessary to resolve any dietary errors that may have contributed to dry feathers. Morning and evening mealtimes are specially prepared and scheduled to establish healthy digestion (refer to accompanying brochure - Dietary & Meal Time Recommendations for Healthy Digestion). The diet is nutritionally supplemented to promote healthy preen gland oil production and restore the remaining strength and flexibility of damaged feathers. Importantly, dietary modifications (Complete Health Programme) are needed to nutritionally support the next moult In order that the damaged dry feathers are replaced with strong durable feathers.

### Dry Feather Recovery Programme

#### In Drinking Water

#### On Sterile Seed

Day 1	KD Powder <sup>1</sup>	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite <sup>4</sup>
Day 2	Ioford & Dufoplus <sup>2</sup>	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite <sup>4</sup>
Day 3	Ioford & Dufoplus <sup>2</sup>	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite <sup>4</sup>
Day 4	Fresh water	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite <sup>4</sup>
Day 5	Quik Gel <sup>3</sup>	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite <sup>4</sup>
Day 6	Quik Gel <sup>3</sup>	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite <sup>4</sup>
Day 7	Fresh water	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite <sup>4</sup>

Establish a regular bathing routine to stimulate proper preening behaviour. This helps to release preen oils that condition and strengthen feathers and skin.

Continue glycerine (diluted 1:100) baths daily until healthy preening activity returns.

Provide a nutritionally balanced and functionally healthy diet to promote digestive health and strong feather regrowth.

<sup>1</sup> Mix 1gm KD Powder (white spoon) into 1 litre of drinking water. Fill the water vessel and use the remainder to clean the cage.

<sup>2</sup> Mix 10 drops Ioford & 5 drops Dufoplus thoroughly into 100ml of drinking water.

<sup>3</sup> Mix 1 drop Quik Gel into 100ml of drinking water.

<sup>4</sup> To 100gm of sterile seed add 10 drops of Turbobooster and mix thoroughly. Then, add 1gm (white spoon) each of E-Powder and F-Vite and mix again so that these powders stick to the Turbobooster oil impregnated seed.

#### Continue Daily Bathing:

For birds who like to take a bath rather than shower, the best bathing vessel is a concave shallow dish with rounded edges approximately 3cm deep and filled with warm water. For small birds this can be placed on the floor of the cage. For larger birds, the bathing vessel should be placed high up in the cage adjacent to the roosting area/perch. Larger birds often prefer a shower or bathing in their drinking water container.

## The Importance of Establishing a Health Bathing Routine

In birds with dry feather problems, the need to establish a healthy daily bathing routine is paramount to ensuring the condition does not progress to the more serious feather destruction behaviour. By establishing a daily bathing routine and providing daily bathing opportunities, healthy preening activity is stimulated. This preening activity, along with the above nutritional support, re-conditions the feathers and promotes long term feather strength and vitality.