

PROTECTING YOUR PET BIRD FROM ENVIRONMENTAL AIR POLLUTION

Can Environmental Air Pollution Affect My Bird?

Yes, environmental air pollution can indeed affect your bird. Birds are highly efficient at absorbing airborne substances, making them vulnerable to indoor air quality issues. In fact, indoor air quality may already be worse than outdoor air quality due to various contaminants present in the home environment, including mold, fungi, bacteria, house dust, feather particles, and powder down.

Understanding Air Quality

Air quality is typically measured in terms of Ambient Particulate Matter (PM). PM consists of fine (PM_{2.5}) and coarse (PM₁₀) particles, which are complex mixtures of microscopic carbon-based particles with adsorbed materials that can be inhaled deep into the lungs. Of significant concern is fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), which is a major component of wildfire smoke.

Wildfire Smoke and Air Quality

Wildfire smoke comprises gases and fine particulate matter generated from burning vegetation and materials. This fine particulate matter is especially harmful to both you and your bird. To illustrate, on June 28, 2023, Chicago experienced one of the worst air quality days in the world, with a PM_{2.5} level of 263 (PM_{2.5} 0-50 is considered good while 263 is considered very unhealthy). In the United States you can check your local air quality at [AirNow.gov](https://airnow.gov) if you are concerned.

Protecting Your Bird from Smoke and Air Pollutants

Here are some essential steps you can take to safeguard your bird from smoke and other air pollutants:

1. **Keep Windows and Doors Closed:** During poor air quality conditions, ensure that all windows and doors are closed to prevent outdoor pollutants from entering your home.
2. **Use Fans and Air Conditioning:** Utilize fans and air conditioning to maintain a comfortable indoor temperature. If staying cool becomes difficult, consider seeking shelter elsewhere.
3. **Reduce Smoke Infiltration:** If you have an HVAC system with a fresh air intake, switch it to recirculate mode or close the outdoor intake damper to minimize smoke entry.



Forest fire smoke polluting the air over homes.



Poor air quality in downtown area on a wildfire smoke day.



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4. **Upgrade Your Air Filter:** If your HVAC system allows, consider upgrading to a MERV 13 or higher rated filter to trap more fine particles.
5. **Manage Evaporative Coolers and Window Air Conditioners:** Avoid using evaporative coolers during smoky conditions, as they can bring more smoke inside. If using a window air conditioner, ensure the outdoor air damper is closed tightly.
6. **Use Portable Air Cleaners:** Portable air cleaners or high-efficiency filters may be helpful to remove fine particles from the air. Run them on the highest fan speed as often as possible.
7. **Minimize Activities that Generate Particles:** During poor air quality periods, avoid indoor activities including:
 - smoking (never allowed!)
 - using gas, propane, or wood-burning stoves and furnaces
 - spraying aerosol products
 - frying or broiling food
 - burning candles or incense
 - vacuuming (unless you have a vacuum with a HEPA filter).
8. **Create a Clean Room:** Establish a clean room within your home following EPA guidelines to provide a safe haven for your bird.
9. **Air Out Your Home:** When outdoor air quality temporarily improves, open windows or the fresh air intake on your HVAC system to help circulate cleaner air.

By following these precautions, you not only protect your bird but also promote a healthier indoor environment for yourself and your family. Remember, it's essential to be prepared ahead of time and stay informed about air quality conditions in your area. These suggestions are also beneficial for your respiratory health.

Additional Resources

- <https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/wildfires-and-indoor-air-quality-iaq>
- <https://www.airnow.gov/>



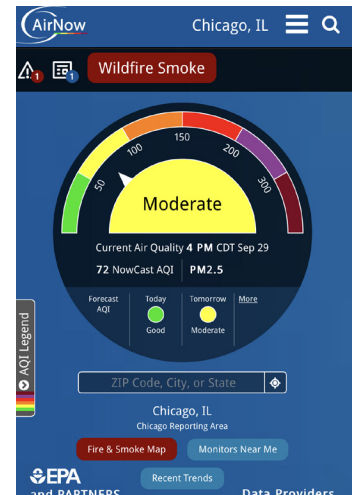
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Employ portable air cleaners or high-efficiency filters to remove fine particles from the air.



Air filter with cockatoo dander. If your HVAC system allows, consider upgrading to a MERV 13 or higher rated filter to trap more fine particles.



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Air out the house when air quality improves.

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AAV: Setting a Standard in Avian Care Since 1980

Avian medicine is a distinct and very specialized field that requires extensive training, advanced skills, and facilities specifically designed and equipped to treat and hospitalize birds. The Association of Avian Veterinarians was established to provide veterinarians with this special education, and to keep them up to date with the latest information on bird health. The AAV holds an annual conference on avian medicine and publishes the peer-reviewed *Journal of Avian Medicine and Surgery*. AAV also makes annual contributions toward avian conservation and sponsors studies advancing the understanding of avian medicine.

For More Information

For more information on birds, ask your veterinarian for copies of the following AAV Client Education Brochures:

- Avian Chlamydiosis and Psittacosis
- Veterinary Care for Your Pet Bird
- Basic Care for Companion Birds
- Behavior: Normal and Abnormal
- Caring for Backyard Chickens
- Caring for Ducks
- Digital Scales
- Feather Loss
- Feeding Birds
- Foraging for Parrots
- Injury Prevention and Emergency Care
- Managing Chronic Egg-laying in Your Pet Bird
- Signs of Illness in Companion Birds
- Ultraviolet Lighting for Companion Birds
- When Should I Take My Bird to a Veterinarian?
- Zoonotic Diseases in Backyard Poultry

Scan to view AAV's Bird
Owner Resources web page!



Online Resources

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Our website, www.aav.org, offers a Find-a-Vet tool to help pet bird owners locate avian veterinarians around the world. We also offer a variety of resources such as basic bird care instructions and more. Visit the website today!



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