

WATER: By Fran Andersen, At Feather's End Aviary

Lighting and Air Quality

Lighting:

We all know that proper lighting is crucial for the health of our birds.

Only fluorescent devices can be full spectrum. For a fluorescent lamp to be properly called full spectrum it must have a CRI (color rendition index) of greater than 90, and Color Temperature of greater than 5000K. It is best to install a lamp with a CRI of 92 or greater to increase the time between change outs. Because of the process of aging while the light may not burn out it may no longer be full spectrum. Some people say that you can go two years between changing these bulbs and I have been using Duro-test which is 5500K and CRI of 96 I change them every 18 months. Also if a lot of dust or debris is allowed to accumulate on the bulb it will reduce its effectiveness. As a matter of routine cleaning the tubes should be wiped clean every month. This type of lighting is used with the electronic ballast which greatly reduces or eliminates the flickering so often seen with the magnetic ballasts.

I also want to add that while our birds need full spectrum lighting for Vitamin D synthesis much of this wavelength is lost as the device ages. It is not wise to depend on electronic lighting to assure your birds Vitamin D needs but to insure it with the proper diet in conjunction with the lighting.

This lighting is needed both for the physical and mental health of our birds.

Air quality:

Air quality is always a concern in our homes and aviary. People often think of Cockatoos as being the birds that produce dust. My aviary consists of 17 to 22 pair of Lineolated Parakeets at any one time and I use a Rabbit Hepa air filter. I am amazed at the end of a few days how the pre-filter is completely and totally covered with bird dander from these little guys. I would recommend that unless you only own a couple of birds you invest in a good quality non ozone producing air filter and follow the manufacturers directions on its use. Both you and your birds will reap the benefit.

I also want to speak of something that many of us do not think of. I personally live in a farm house that is over 100 years old. The foundation is stone and the basement is partially dirt.

Aspergillus is a fungus that is endemic. It is found in most soil. I had a few birds develop an acute case of aspergillosis infection as noted by their increased breathing rate. I took them to the vet and was informed that she sees many cases particularly in the fall when the furnaces are first turned on. The filters have been there all summer with their collection of bacteria, fungi and who knows what else and then we get a cold day and it all goes into our air ducts when we turn on our furnace. Birds that have been raising chicks all summer and are compromised can be susceptible. I treated the birds with sporonox, called out a duct cleaning service and change my filters every three weeks to one month because I am so conscious of it now. I mention this to help make people aware. I had thought that aspergillosis was only among birds that were kept in dank, wet places with lots of mold around. I now know better. This was a few years ago. I have not had a problem since.