

## A Parrot's Bill of Rights

By Jane Hallander Taken From 'A Parrot's Bill of Rights' by Stewart A. Metz, M.D.

1. GET TO KNOW ABOUT PARROTS BEFORE YOU BRING ME HOME - I am not a domesticated pet like a dog or cat. I still have the spirit of the jungle in me. I have special needs which you may find it hard to fill. Please don't learn these too late for my well-being. And please don't acquire one of my cousins wild from the jungle-it will jeopardize his survival and well-being, and that won't be a party for you either!

2. GIVE ME THE LARGEST HOME POSSIBLE - I am used to flying through rainforests or savannas. I have given up this great gift for your pleasure. At the very least, give me enough room to flap my wings and exercise. And I need toys for my amusement and wood to chew-otherwise, I might confuse your Home with the forest and its trees.

3. GIVE ME A NUTRITIOUS DIET - I need a wide variety of fresh and nutritious foods, even if they take time to prepare. I cannot survive on seed alone. Take time to learn what my needs are.

4. LET ME HAVE A "SOCIAL LIFE" - I am a gregarious flock animal-but I am not one of you. I need lots of socialization to learn how to act with you, and with my siblings. I also need to have adequate quality time with you every day-no matter what your schedule or other needs are. I am a living, feeling creature. Above all, I need to be able to have complete trust in you, and count on your predictability in looking after me-every day.

5. LET ME BE CLEAN - I may like to drop food or even throw it, but I need meticulous cleanliness to be healthy. My skin itches without frequent showers, the barbs of my feathers won't seal if they become oily and, worst of all, I may become ill if my food or water is not always sanitary.

6. I NEED MY OWN DOCTOR - You may not understand my physiology and therefore you may not recognize it early on when I get sick. And it may be too late when you do because I hide my illnesses (remember what I said about my being an animal of the jungle, where there are lots of predators). And I need an avian vet-a specialist (no HMOs for me please). If you can't afford one, perhaps you shouldn't have taken me home.

7. PLEASE DON'T PUNISH ME - Just as I don't always understand your peculiarities, you may not understand mine. I don't TRY to get in trouble-remember, a house is not the jungle. If I do screw up, don't yell at me, and never hit me. I have sensitive ears and I may never trust you again if you strike me. Hands are sometimes scary things to us (why in the world would you not be zygodactyls like us?) Even more importantly, we don't learn by punishment. We are gentle creatures who only strike back to protect ourselves; we learn through patience and love.

8. SPEAK MY "LANGUAGE" - I know you get upset with me when I knock over my water bowl, throw food, scream, or pluck my feathers. I don't do these to annoy you-I am probably trying to tell you something (perhaps that I am hurting, lonely, or sad.) Learn to speak MY (body) language. Remember that I, alone of all creatures on this planet, learn to speak yours!

9. SEE ME AS AN INDIVIDUAL - I am a unique and feeling being...No two of us are alike. Please don't be disappointed in me if I don't talk like you wanted or can't do the tricks that your friend's parrot can do. But if you pay close attention to me (and I always empathize with you,

whether you know it or not), I will show you a unique being who will give you so much more than talking and playing...Give me a chance to show you who I am; I think you'll find the effort with it. And remember-I am not an ornament; I do not enhance ANY living room decor. And I am not a status symbol-if you use me as such, I might nip at your up-turned nose!

10. SHARE YOUR LOVE WITH ME - Above all, please remember that you are my Special Person. I put all my trust and faith in you...We parrots are used to being monogamous. (No barhopping for us!). So please don't go away for long periods or give me away-that would be a sadness from which I may never recover. If that seems to be asking a lot, remember-you could have learned about my needs BEFORE bringing me home. Even having a baby or taking a new job isn't a fair reason-you made a commitment to me FIRST! And if you think that you must leave me because you might die, provide for me forever after you leave. I may live to a ripe old age, but I can't provide for myself. Remember I'm in a small cage amongst people who are not of my blood.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Set of Ten Commandments From "A Parrots Point of View"

1. If you like it, it's mine
2. If I can reach it, it's mine
3. If it's in my beak, it's mine.
4. If I can take it from you, it's mine.
5. If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.
6. If it's mine, it must never appear to be yours in any way.
7. If I'm chewing something, all the pieces are mine.
8. If it looks like mine, it's mine.
9. If I saw it first, it's mine.
10. If you have something and you put it down, it automatically becomes mine.

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF PARROT OWNERSHIP

1. My life is likely to last 10 to 20 or more years. Any separation from you will be painful to me. Remember that before you take me home.
2. Give me time to understand what you want from me.
3. Place your trust in me. It's crucial to my wellbeing.
4. Don't be angry with me for long, and don't lock me up as punishment. You have your work, your entertainment, your friends. I have only you.
5. Talk to me sometimes. Even if I don't understand your words, I do understand your voice when it's speaking to me.
6. Be aware that however you treat me, I'll never forget it.
7. Remember before you strike me that I have a beak that could easily crush the bones of your hand, but that I choose not to bite you.
8. Before you scold me for being uncooperative, obstinate, or lazy, ask yourself if something might be bothering me. Perhaps I'm not getting the right food, or I've been in the cage too long.
9. Take care of me when I get old, you too will get old.
10. Go with me on my last journey. Never say "I can't bear to watch it" or "Let it happen in my absence."  
Everything is easier for me if you are there. Remember, I Love You.

Ten Commandments Of Parrot Ownership - from a parrot's point of view.  
By Jane Hallander Taken From 'A Parrot's Bill of Rights' by Stewart A. Metz, M.D.