

Avian Practice: Facility Design and Equipment

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Abstract: Birds are not mammals! Being unique (considered by some to be “extra terrestrial”), their care and evaluation requires a facility and equipment that is often different from that used in the care of mammals.

Introduction

Avian species have unique anatomical, physiological, and biological traits that require a different clinical approach than that for mammalian species. Much of the equipment used for mammals can be used for birds. Some equipment will need to be adapted for avian care. The specialized equipment that is needed can also be used for small mammals as well as for reptiles.

The physical plant’s design should also be considered when avian species are received for care in a veterinary facility.

Hospital Design

It is possible to see avian patients in a “dog and cat” hospital, but a few thoughtful features will make clients more comfortable and the birds less stressed.

Consider a separated reception/waiting room area for birds. Birds should be transported to the veterinary facility in their cage, a carrier, or a small enclosed container. Although the bird will not be affected by it, the client will appreciate a comfortable area, appointed with suitable art.

Examination (consulting) rooms should be smaller than those used for dogs and cats. Seven feet wide by eight feet long is an adequate size. In addition, the room should not have windows or skylights. A counter over cabinets and drawers along one end of the room provides storage for equipment and supplies as well as an additional work surface. A seat, that can be folded out of the way, should be provided for the client. A small examination table will complete the furnishing of the room. Consider decorating the examination room in the same manner as the reception area in order to create a pleasant atmosphere that is calming and interesting to the client. Educational posters, charts, and information can also be displayed. The room needs to be well lit, but also must have the option to be darkened when needed to catch escaped free flying birds.

Wards for hospitalized birds should be quiet, warm, separated from noisy mammals if possible, and be equipped with dimmers to allow for reduction of light levels. Birdcages can be placed in regular dog and cat cages. Special enclosures for birds are ideal and can serve to hold small mammals and reptiles as well. To conserve space, these enclosures can be kept on shelves along a wall.

Equipment

Much of the equipment used for mammalian patients can be used for birds, and some of the equipment obtained for avian patients can be used for mammals. Most of the equipment is commercially available. Some equipment can be made easily by the practitioner. Following is a list of items that are needed and/or recommended for seeing avian patients in a veterinary practice.

Birdcage
“T” perch on stand
Talcum (baby) powder
Kwik Stop® (styptic powder)
Band cutter
Nail scissors and clippers
Moisturizing cream (e.g. Nivea®)
Metal gavage tubes
Red rubber feeding tubes
Silver nitrate sticks
Culturettes and micro culturettes
Mini serum separators
Micro hematocrit tubes
Glass slides and cover slips
Nets
Towels: washcloth, face, and bath sizes
Specula
Gauze rolls
Wet proof adhesive tape
Masking tape
Bird restraint board
Sterilized cotton buds (Q-tips®)
Insulin syringes: 0.3 cc, 0.5 cc, and 1.0 cc with 25-29 gauge needles
“Buster” bird collars
Super glue
Stapler
Foam pipe insulation
Davol irrigation syringe (70 cc) with catheter tip (piston type)
Assorted sizes syringes and needles:
 1 cc – 60 cc
 27 gauge – 18 gauge needles, 1/2 to 1-1/2 inches
High detail x-ray cassettes and film
Incubator
Water blanket and pump
Raptor gloves
Gram stain kit
Wright’s stain kit
Pediatric stethoscope
Stockinet
Dremel® with attachments
Educational booklets
Condolence cards
Small surgical instruments

Small gauge suture material
Hemoclips
Ora Plus® and Ora Sweet®
Prepared skeleton
Ivermectin®
Psyllium
Feeding formula
Doxycycline (Vibramycin calcium syrup)
Claforan®
Amikacin
Piperacillin
Trimethoprim-sulfa
Ketoconazole
Fluconazole
Isoflurane and delivery system with masks and tracheal tubes
Scales and weighing aids:
 Ohaus triple beam, 700 series, 2610 gm
 Ohaus hume-o-gram battery operate platform scale 0 – 1000 gm
 Basket with cover
 Perches
Radio-surgical unit with attachments (Ellman®)
Laparoscope
Microscope (An attached TV camera and monitor is a valuable practice builder and educational aid)