

COCKATOOS IN THE RAW

The misconceptions of cockatoo ownership. Promoting responsible buying and selling of these magnificent creatures.

Tag Words: Cockatoos; ownership; licensing; responsible pet ownership contract; bird.

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Summary

People are unaware of how time consuming owning a cockatoo can be and the quality of care needed to maintain a healthy environment for them. As a result there is a high surrender rate of these birds and other species of parrots. Currently, following the purchase of exotic birds, the owner is supposed to get a permit but this is poorly enforced. We propose that the seller be required to inform the owner of the responsibilities of owning an exotic bird prior to purchase. A petition was created, <http://cockatoos1.epetitions.net/>, to garner support for requiring information to be given to the potential exotic bird owner and the letter was sent to New Jersey's senators to propose that they added language to the current permitting laws to include responsible exotic bird ownership

Video Link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWS552QE7PE&feature=plcp&context=C4ceb907VDvjVQa1PpcFM6xqcUqUMidFeAFzpumxbuMeDxG6lYP7A%3D>

Cockatoos...The Beast Behind The Beauty

(RA) Three strikes and you're out. After multiple warnings, your landlord has finally left an eviction notice on your door pushing you into a corner. The neighbors have been complaining about the incessant noise seeping through your walls and the authorities have warned that the noise complaints have gotten out of hand. Your parrot is no longer the sweet, quiet bird you brought home 3 years ago. "Parrot talk" has turned into constant screaming. Friendly nipping has turned into aggressive and extremely dangerous biting behavior. His cage is no longer just a place for him to sleep or retreat to, it has become the domain in which he will protect ferociously. No matter what type of discipline you attempt

nothing seems to be working.

Exotic parrots with their vibrant personalities and beautiful bright colored feathers have the capability of attracting a crowd merely by their looks. As beautiful and unique as they are, most of the world's population is unaware of their specific and complicated overall needs, there extremely large cage requirements, distinct food needs, unexpected sexual aggression, extremely high decibel ear piercing screams and their frequent grooming needs. The situation presented above is one that most inexperienced parrot owners are faced with within the first two to three years of buying a parrot.

Placing breed and age aside, parrot owners must make themselves more aware of the genetic and physiological changes that our companion parrots have undergone. Being in captivity, parrots are no longer required to travel the depths of the rain forest in search of food, shelter from predators, or mates. Their food is simply placed in front of them, allowing them free range to eat whenever they deem it necessary, their indoor cages shield them from anything harmful in their environment and mates are chosen for them. This significant decrease in energy expenditure puts our beloved companion parrots at risk for obesity, and boredom which may lead to self mutilating behavior and uncontrollable screeching. Parrots can live to be up to 80 years old, therefore before making such a life long commitment, future parrot owners should consider every aspect of owning a parrot that will be discussed in depth in this paper.

Cage Size:

Large parrots such as cockatoos must be housed in a cage that is a minimum of 3 ft. by 2.5 ft by 3 ft high, these cages can range between two hundred to seven hundred dollars. The parrot should be able to extend it's wings three times width wise in the cage that it is placed in. Large parrots need larger cages, not only for their own comfort but also in order to house their toys. Parrots are extraordinarily smart creators that need constant entertainment. Parrot boredom has proven to develop into destructive and attention seeking behavior. Durable toys that can withstand the force of a cockatoos beak, though costly, are crucial for their psychological well being. In the wild parrots spend most of their day foraging for food, interacting with other birds, sleeping and grooming. Therefore, placing foraging toys in their cages to keep them occupied while their owners are away is necessary. Large parrots, specifically cockatoos enjoy shredding paper, making toothpicks out of wood and destroying any toys they find interesting. A large cage and a plethora of expensive toys are not the only necessities of these unique animals. A proper non-seed diet is top of the list for maintaining a happy and healthy feathered friend.

Diet:

Parrots unlike other animals have very demanding nutritional needs that must be met in order for them to acquire the necessary amounts of vitamins and minerals from their diets. The term “non-seed based” diet is not meant to be understood as a diet “lacking in seed” rather a diet that is **NOT predominantly** seed. A parrots diet should be chiefly colorless pellets and should consist of fresh fruits and vegetables with only 10% seed. According to an article written by Dr. Susan E. Orosz PhD, DVM, Dipl ABVP (Avian), Dipl ECZM (Avian) in a January 2010 issue of BirdTalk magazine “Seed-only diets are deficient in fat-soluble vitamins and many of the major minerals, including calcium, phosphorus, sodium, manganese, zinc, iron, iodine and selenium. These seed-only diets are often too high in fat.” A wide variety of different vitamin and mineral deficiencies have the ability to adversely effect our companion birds health and therefore, their behavior.

Vitamin Needs:

Parrots with certain B vitamin deficiencies may become shaky due to improper neurological function. This may cause the parrot to become insecure and very stressed which may lead to feather picking. Vitamin deficiency induced pain may result in biting, constantly fluffed feathers, or a parrot that remains at the bottom of the cage. According to the article “Good Food Fosters Good Behavior” in the January 2009 issue of BirdTalk, written by Dr. Gregory Rich “Deficiencies (in calcium) have been documented to cause ataxia, seizures, and egg-binding in egg laying birds. Any bird that is off balance or having seizures is surely more likely than not to exhibit anxiety disorders, biting behaviors or fear.” This shows the importance of a healthy well balanced diet. Due to the fact that parrots are prey animals in the wild, they have acquired an ability to hide any pain or illness they may be experiencing. If proper care is not taken, an owner may not be able to discern any type of sickness in their companion parrot until the last stages.

Importance of a healthy diet:

A healthy diet like in any animal or human has the ability to prevent many health problems as well as curb some unwanted behavior in parrots. A parrot that eats a diet of mainly seed can be correlated to a child that eats only peanut butter and jelly sandwiches through out his/her life. This high caloric intake will, over time begin to greatly effect the parrot’s health and overall behavior. Dr. Rich states “Blocked arteries from cholesterol plaques can make a bird have anxiety attacks or high blood pressure, fatty liver disease can make a bird sluggish, and obesity makes a bird unfit for flying and limits its mobility.” Owners often make the mistake of placing large amounts of a variety of foods in front of their parrots thinking that they will seek out the food they need in order to naturally maintain their nutritional requirements. However, Dr. Orosz states “while they (parrots) can choose the right amount of energy, amino acids and calcium, they don’t choose other

requirements correctly.” This is one out of the myriad of reasons it is vital for the owner to provide a well balanced diet for their parrot.

Pellets:

The best approach to providing a well balanced diet is through offering pellets. According to Dr. Orosz “By grinding up the grains and seeds and including necessary vitamins and minerals, birds are kept from picking out and choosing individual parts of the food.” Brands such as Kaytee, Zupreem, Hagen, Roudybush, Harrisons and Lafeber are available at local pet stores. If a parrot is provided with a predominantly pelleted diet it greatly decreases the chances of them developing diet related health problems. It has been documented that parrots behavior is greatly adjusted once they are weaned off an unhealthy high caloric diet. They may become less self-destructive, meaning they will reduce and possibly eliminate any feather picking behavior, their hormonal out-lashes will greatly be reduced and unpredictable biting behavior may be curbed.

Along with a pelleted diet, parrots can also be provided with fresh fruits and vegetables. However, this must be done in moderation. Dr. Orosz states “ adding too many vegetables and fruits to the diet for variety and for enrichment can dilute the nutrition of balanced foods...the reason that this might not be observed commonly is that most domestic fruits and vegetables are largely comprised of water.” As Dr. Rich states “feeding the correct diet in excess, as well as feeding the wrong diet, are both forms of malnutrition.” So a parrot owner must take into consideration the vitamin and energy requirements of their specific bird to assure they are providing them with an appropriate balance. A diet that may be appropriate for a hyacinth may not be balanced well enough for an amazon.

A great deal of attention must be given to the nutritional aspect of a parrots life. Parrot owners must make themselves more aware of the specific nutritional needs of not only the species of parrot they own but also of their activity level, breeding situation, etc.. It is also important to remember that the amount of a balanced diet provided must be taken into consideration. A variety of healthy foods must be provided in moderation. Dr. Rich clearly summarizes the basic guidelines every devoted parrot owner should follow. He notes his personal preference based on his medical knowledge and real life experience. He states; “My personal diet dont’s are; do not feed 100-percent seeds to any type of Psittacine parrot, do not feed store bought treats every day, do not have millet spray or honey sticks in the cage constantly, do not feed foods cooked in butter or cooking oil, do not feed fried food and never feed candy or sugar-coated foods (including breakfast cereals.” If greater concern is given merely to their nutritional needs, parrot owners would be more satisfied with the overall behavior of their pets. However, you should not be lead to believe that nutrition is the only part playing a role in your feathered friends behavior.

Parrots Need for Attention:

Parrots, specifically cockatoos crave a great deal of human attention. They are companion animals and can, if trained properly, express a lot of affection. These animals, like children will go to great lengths to be noticed regardless if the attention they are getting is positive or negative. Parrots will respond to negative reinforcement and will continue expressing unwanted behaviors. Due to their incredible intelligence, companion parrots discover ways to manipulate their owners into giving them what they want. Once an inexperienced bird owner has enforced such behaviors it has proven to be a challenge to change them. This is why prevention is the key when it comes to parrot training. Preventing these behaviors from developing is also very challenging, however easier when one is educated before purchasing a companion parrot. One unwanted behavior that most parrot owners face is loud incessant screaming. The scream of a cockatoo can reach up to 135 decibels, this sound level is equivalent to the sound of a jet's engine. Unless sound proof walls are installed in your home, be assured that your neighbors will hear your cockatoo scream. Neighbors who become intolerant of your parrots screaming can involve the authorities who may give you a fine for the noise.

As if the nose did not suffice, cockatoos have a terrible habit of resorting to self mutilation for attention. Cockatoos will pluck their chest feathers and pinch their skin until they begin to bleed out. At this point you will be obligated to take your companion parrot to the veterinarian which, as most pet owners know, can be very costly. Most people looking to buy a parrot choose the cockatoo because of how affectionate they are. However, what most people do not know is that this affection comes with a price. This price is attention...and lots of it! Cockatoos need constant attention through out the day. Having a full time job alone will keep you away from home longer than your cockatoo may be able to handle. Taking into consideration not only your present life but also what may come of your life in the future is a must. Consider the possibility of having a baby and how an animal as affectionate and territorial as a parrot may react to this new addition. Many parrots are placed in sanctuaries after their owners have a baby for many reasons. The parents fear that a parrot as large as a cockatoo may harm their newborn child, the screech of a cockatoo can startle a sleeping baby and not to mention the dander that these majestically white creatures release into the air.

Grooming

Cockatoos release a powder called powder down which can be very hard for their owners to tolerate especially if they have medical problems, such as asthma or allergies. Parrots need constant grooming not only for their own benefit but also for the benefit of their owners. Their dander if not controlled can cover the areas of your home surrounding

their cage. This dander is breathed in by other pets and any residents of the home. Frequent showers are necessary to control the dander. A high quality HEPA filter may also help, however these product are very costly.

Current Federal Regulation

(AE) Aside from New Jersey, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Washington also have state regulations that require buyers and seller to acquire a permit for owning exotic bird species. These mentioned states plus California, Washington D.C., Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, Vermont, and Virginia also outline maintenance and management practices that must be adhered to. These requirements include, but are not limited to, a minimum space requirement to house the bird within, a perch that allows the bird to stand completely upright, cage accessories made of unsealed wood that can be cleaned daily, and adequate food and water⁴. The remaining 26 states do not have specific regulations or permit requirements, but, instead, must obey federal regulations.

There are three United States laws regulating the purchase and sale of exotic birds. The Wild Bird Conservation Act states that owners may not import exotic birds into the United States, unless they have left the country for at least one year and are returning with pets they took with them. The Endangered Species Act states that the possession, sale, or purchase of an endangered species is not allowed in the United States, unless a captive-bred wildlife permit is obtained. And the Lacey Act states that the United States government may persecute anyone who possesses an illegal animal in the United States or from another country⁴. These regulations are effective to an extent. While they make it permissible for a Fish and Wildlife representative to penalize a pet store, breeder, etc. for not obeying federal regulations, private sellers and owners that do not comply with the state regulations slip through the cracks. These regulations are efficient guidelines, but they are not effective because they are not implemented appropriately.

Current New Jersey Regulations

(JP) The state of New Jersey has detailed regulations for the purchase and sale of birds. These regulations can be found under Title 7 Department of Environmental Protection: Chapter 25 Division of Fish and Wildlife Rules-Subchapter 4 Endangered, Nongame and Exotic Wildlife⁵.

All the regulations are applied equally to all exotic wildlife, meaning that there is not a specific regulation for a cockatoo.

According to “N.J. REGULATION - Possession of Nongame & Exotic Wildlife”⁵

“Wild bird means any bird other than native, introduced, or feral game bird in R.S. 23:4-49 and other than a domesticated bird such as a chicken, turkey, guinea fowl, goose, duck, pigeon or peafowl. “Wild bird” also means the egg of a wild bird”⁵.

A permit is needed to possess any wild life species and the list of birds that need a permit for possession is as following (in accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.3):

- i. Red-fronted parrot – *Amazona viridigenalis*;
- ii. Turquoise-fronted parrot- *Amazona aestiva*;
- iii. Yellow-cheeked Parrot - *Amazona a. autumnalis*
- iv. Half-moon Conure - *Aratinga canicularis burnirostrum*
- v. Jenday Conure - *Aratinga jandaya*
- vi. Sun Conure - *Aratinga solstitialis*
- vii. Nanday Conure - *Nandayus nenday*
- viii. African/Timneh Gray Parrot - *Psittacus erithacus*
- ix. Macaws - *Ara spp. & Anodorhynchus spp.* (Except endangered forms)

Wild birds exempted from this requirement are as following:

- i. Budgerigar - *Melopsittacus undulatus*
- ii. Cockatiel - *Nymphicus hollandicus*
- iii. Peafowl - *Pavocristatus*
- iv. Rock Dove - *Columba livia*
- v. Canary - *Serinus canari*
- vi. House Sparrow - *Passer domesticus*
- vii. European Starling - *Sturnis vulgaris*
- viii. Zebra Finch - *Poephilaguttatus*
- ix. Society Finch - *Lonchura domestica*
- x. Emu - *Dromaius novaehollandiae*
- xi. Ostrich - *Struthio camelus*
- xii. Greater Rhea - *Rhea Americana*
- xiii. Lesser Rhea - *Pterocnemia pennata*

Birds that are not in the exempt list require a permit for possession meaning that to possess a cockatoo a permit is needed.

There are different kinds of permits, but the ones we are going to focus on are:

Individual hobby: Given to a person who has the exotic bird as a pet or for hobby.

Pet shop/ Animal dealer: Given to a private person or establishments engaged in the retail sale.

Bird Breeder: Given to a person or persons meeting the criteria for the possession of wild-

caught birds for breeding purposes, not for retail. If the breeder wants to sell the birds, then he/she needs a pet shop or animal dealer permit.

When selling an exotic bird an “Exotic or Nongame Sales Receipt” must be issued to the buyer. This receipt will work as the temporary possession permit valid only for 20 days. After that time, the tenancy of these birds must be accompanied by an annual permit (permit expires on December 31 of the year of issue)⁶.

To apply for these permits, every applicant should demonstrate that: the bird will be fed properly, the bird will be house in the right condition where the bird can perform normal behavior, veterinary treatment will be provided when needed, and that the bird is free of infectious diseases or parasites.

If a regulated exotic bird is obtained from an “illegal “source (meaning from somebody who does not have a permit to sell these birds), you will be in violation of N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.7 which states as follows:

“Prior to the issuance of any permit permitted by these regulations, every applicant shall, in forms provided by the Department, demonstrate that the methods of acquisition did not violate the laws and regulations of this state, any other state or the Federal Government⁵”

Violating this law will cause you penalties and the possible revocation of your permit.

As explained above there are regulations of permits needed to sell or buy a cockatoo, but nothing to protect buyers from greedy sellers who will not provide the potential buyer with the proper information.

After looking to the current regulations that will not make sure that the potential buyer is proper informed about the potential risks that comes with owning a cockatoo, we came up with a solution that will give the buyer the protection needed.

Innovative Solution

(AE) Since there are already current regulations regarding the buying and selling of cockatoos in New Jersey, the only way to ensure these regulations are applied is to amend the law in some way, shape, or form. To effectively accomplish our goal, a change must be put into place that will both “scare” unknowledgeable buyers away from purchasing a cockatoo and “scare” sellers away from making transactions with anyone who is willing to pay the cost.

In order for buyers to be "scared off", they must be able to see both sides of caring for and owning a cockatoo as a pet. Typically, sellers are only interested in making money. In order to make a sale, they will lead with the positives of owning a cockatoo, such as, their affectionate nature as young birds. Often times, the risks and hardships are omitted while

talking to potential buyers. Information about these birds on webpages may be sugar-coated, as well, because the ubiquitous bird ads supporting the maintenance of these sites prohibits the publishing of material that will negatively affect their sales⁵. In order for sellers to be "scared off", there must be some form of punishment they could potentially receive for giving a cockatoo away to an unfit owner and/or selling the bird without disclosing all of the necessary information whether it is positive or negative.

Our idea is to draft a responsible pet ownership contract that must be signed by both parties during the transaction. This responsible pet ownership contract will list all of the risks associated with the purchase of a cockatoo and the proper measures a bird owner must take before owning an exotic animal as a pet. By signing the responsible pet ownership contract, a buyer is complying with the state and federal regulations of acquiring a yearly permit, as well as, providing at least the minimum of care as outlined by the government. He or she is also agreeing to have read and accepted the potential risks of buying and owning a cockatoo. By signing this responsible pet ownership contract, a seller is complying with the law of acquiring a yearly permit to sell cockatoos, as well as, abiding by state and federal regulations regarding the sale of these birds. He or she is also agreeing to have physically seen proof that the buyer has a valid permit and evidence that the buyer is indeed suitable to own, care for, and maintain the bird. After both parties sign the document, it must be filed at the township where it is kept on record.

Benefits of a Responsible pet ownership contract

The intent of drafting this responsible pet ownership contract is to protect both cockatoos and humans. It is our expectation that the process of having to read through and sign a contractual obligation will put off first-time bird owners and potential buyers that are not serious about the commitment or are oblivious to what they are in for.

After doing much research of the typical birds surrendered to shelters and speaking with sanctuary owners, cockatoos are in the top three most commonly abandoned birds. Wings of Hope, a not-for-profit bird foster organization based out of New Jersey, reported that two of the nineteen birds in their care are cockatoos, but seventeen are currently on a waiting list to be placed in foster homes! Joanne Freel, a representative of Wings of Hope, stated in an e-mail to me, "It is very spooky that you would just happen to be asking questions about cockatoos, rescue, and the education needed to care for them... We speak to so many people, almost daily, who have cockatoos and no longer want them, or cannot give them the special care they need anymore." This story is not a unique one. After a simple 'cockatoo' keyword search in the wanted/for sale category on craigslist.org, ads such as this one were not uncommon throughout New Jersey: "All White Umbrella Cockatoo (with yellow under feathers). Her name is LOLA, she's 2 yrs old and she's very loving and affectionate.

Unfortunately with my newly busy schedule I can no longer devote the time and attention she deserves.” These birds are a huge commitment and require an enormous amount of time, attention, dedication, and proper management. Humankind has chosen to take these birds from their vast environment in the wild to a domesticated setting, and it is in the bird’s best interest that it is placed in a home where all of its needs are met. Anything less would just be cruel and inhumane. This responsible pet ownership contract would help protect the rights and welfare of these magnificent creatures.

This responsible pet ownership contract is not only security for the bird’s health and well-being, but it also guarantees the safety of the buyer and owner who may be unaware of how to properly handle cockatoos. In one ad on craigslist for the sale of an umbrella cockatoo, it states, “I do have children, she doesn’t bother them, but real little ones you do need to watch, she doesn’t like fast movements...”. One helpless man seeks the help of cockatoo owners on a renowned parrot forum, after adopting a ten year old cockatoo, saying, “...She said the bird has bitten her on occasions when she tries putting it back in the cage. I just assumed it was because he hasn’t been handled very often. I played with and held the bird for a good hour or so then when we started packing all his stuff up he about bit my ear off. I’m sure the bird was confused and didn’t know what was going on. Plus the owner was in tears from having to give up the bird. So I’m sure the bird picked up on that to... It’s been two days at my house now and I thought I would attempt letting the bird out of his cage. The bird didn’t want to come out and tried biting me again. I just closed the door and I figure I will just let the bird come out when he wants to. It might take a few days or even weeks. I was just wondering how long it generally takes a bird to re-adjust to a new home? Also how can I train him not to bite? I am terrified of getting bitten in the ear again... Any help would greatly be appreciated”. In domesticated settings, cockatoos can pose a huge threat to humans, especially those who have little or no experience in handling them. The purchase of cockatoos can lead to permanent physical damage, among other debilitating conditions.

In Case you Missed it

Overall, parrot care and specifically cockatoo care is not only expensive but very time consuming as well. Most people do not take into account the true nature of this beautiful beast. Prevention is the key to saving these majestic creators from a life behind bars in overpopulated sanctuaries.

New Jersey has regulations that control the selling and buying of exotic birds as cockatoos but there is not law that enforces sellers to proper inform buyers of the needs and dangers of a cockatoo. Enforcing the responsible pet ownership contract in both sellers and

buyer will benefit them both since buyers will be informed of the cons of owning a cockatoo and can't sue the seller for not informing them if anything happens.

Reality Check: Service Project

The Solution Restated

(AE)

There is a current lack of awareness surrounding the ownership of cockatoos. Many buyers are either misinformed about the responsibilities of cockatoo care, or have not been educated on cockatoo care at all. As a group, we believe an effective solution to this issue is to recruit the government and target the actual process of purchasing a cockatoo. By tightening the regulations of the transaction, sellers are less likely to romanticize the ownership of large, exotic parrots, and buyers are more likely to be informed of the cons of cockatoo ownership allowing them to make a sound choice on whether or not to purchase the bird. We believe this could be achieved by adding a responsible pet ownership contract to be signed by the seller and buyer during the time of purchase. The responsible pet ownership contract will disclose important, beneficial information about the specific care needed to care for cockatoos, the potential consequences of not fulfilling these duties, the common behavioral problems that can result, and the dangers that may ensue if the cockatoo is unintentionally neglected. The buyer signs in acceptance of the "terms" of cockatoo ownership, and the seller signs as a witness of a befitting bird owner.

The Solution in Action: our Petition and Legislative Letter

To accomplish and test this innovative solution, we first started by creating an online petition. The petition explains our view of the current issue and how we feel we can solve it. It encourages viewers to sign if they agree with our argument and would like to see the state of New Jersey make our specified changes to the laws regarding the selling and purchasing of cockatoos. The benefit of this petition is that it provides proof that the current issue at hand is not only important to our group, but it is also important to the general public. We chose to create an online petition because our message will far exceed the amount of people we would be able to physically reach. The petition is still active, and will remain active until we decide to take it down. This gives us the opportunity to continually share it with friends, family, co-workers, colleagues, and strangers alike. Anyone interested in the cause can simply input the petition link or browse for it through the site and type in their name as their signature. It is a convenient, quick, and simple method to rally for a cause.

After our petition was created, we forwarded it to classmates, friends, family, animal science club officers, and animal science students at Rutgers University. After about a week of being active, our petition generated 19 signatures. We attached the petition print out to three individual letters, one written by each group member. These formal letters were addressed and sent to the senators of New Jersey- Frank Lautenberg and Robert Menendez. Each letter explained our issue and potential solution and requested that the state of New Jersey highly consider improving upon the laws of buying and selling cockatoos by including an informational responsible pet ownership contract. We have yet to hear a reply.

Our You Tube Video

(AE)To ensure our efforts proved fruitful, our group decided to not only target the government for support, but also reach out directly to the general public. We accomplished this by creating an information-rich video that can be searched during any potential first-time bird owner's quest to discover more about cockatoo ownership.

(RA)Our group service project included a detailed interview with Terri Jones owner of Arcadia bird sanctuary in Freehold NJ. Our mission as a group was to remove the black veil that blanketed the eyes of most novice parrot owners and future owners as well. Terri Jones speaks in detail about the hardships of owning cockatoos and provides real life examples of tribulations she faces on a day to day basis with these feathered beauties. As a group we had the privilege of interacting with a few of the cockatoos she has presently at the sanctuary. The cockatoos aided us in our video by doing things they would normally do in a household setting. They posed as a great reality check for viewers who are under the impression that people are exaggerating when they speak about these parrots.

(JP) In the video, the potential buyer can hear from a reliable source the reality about this lovely birds. Terri Jones explains that she had gone several times to the E.R because she has been bitten by these birds. She explains that they are nice birds but there are risks like with any exotic bird. With this video been readily available to anybody and very informative, we hope to make potential buyers aware that raising cockatoos comes with risks and as a result we hope to reduce the number of cockatoos being surrendered.

Our Outreach

(JP) We gathered some signatures online from people that agree with us in the fact that we need to change the law, unfortunately they weren't enough but the petition will stay open and we will wait until we get enough signatures to resend the letter to the senator. In the meantime the video we made and uploaded online will help to do the job that most of the sellers do not do and will benefit the buyer by making them aware of what they are going to get into.

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Letters to the Editor

Sent it to Bird Watcher's Digest 04 April 2012

Shameful Unawareness

Dear Editor:

The number of cockatoos rescued by bird sanctuaries and others rescue centers are increasing in such a rate that makes almost impossible to help all these lovely birds. People buy cockatoos unaware of all the special care needed to raise one and the potential problems they may encounter in this process. Since many sellers do not inform potential buyers of the care and need for these birds, many buyers buy them thinking that they are just like any other bird; but the reality is that they are different. Because of the lack of special care and time that these too's need, they can turn out to be very dangerous to their handlers resulting in unwanted outcomes.

This danger and the noise that these birds make are the reasons for which some people resign their birds to bird sanctuaries or to the streets.

When something like this is happening, we can either let this happen or do something to change it and I choose to do something to change it. Making people aware of the special needs and care of cockatoos will help them to make the right judgment and decide if this charming bird is the perfect fit in their house and family. I would encourage your readers to visit the following website which will tell you the truth that any potential buyer should know at www.mytoos.com.

Cockatoos can be the next member of your family for up to 80 years, so the right decision must be made knowing all the pros and cons of owning this beautiful bird.

Janet Peralta

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Sent it to Senators Menendez and Lautenberg 04 April 2012

Subject: Stricter laws in order to wean out unsuitable individuals for the ownership of exotic parrots-specifically cockatoos

Dear Senators Menendez and Lautenberg

I am writing in hopes of shining more light on an ongoing issue in our community. This issue pertains to the selling of cockatoos to individuals who do not have the appropriate expectations regarding ownership of these magnificent creatures. These expectations may be unrealistic due to many reasons including ignorance whether due to lack of research on their part, or misguidance from breeders looking to make a payment. A few members of the animal science program at Rutgers New Brunswick and I, are trying to, not only educate people regarding this issue, but also create stricter laws that will cause people to ultimately think twice before making such a large and life long commitment.

Please do not misunderstand my plea, I am in no way trying to ban the selling and buying of these beautiful birds. I am simply trying to adjust some minor issues that have been short sighted by breeders around the world. My colleagues and I are attempting to change the state laws regarding the purchasing and selling of these birds. There is currently limited regulation on both ends; the seller and buyer must have permits. We'd like the state of NJ to include a responsible pet ownership contract that discloses the risks of owning a cockatoo that the buyer must sign, verifying he/she accepts these terms. The seller must also sign the responsible pet ownership contract verifying that he/she has seen proof of a

permit from the buyer, and that the buyer would make a fitting cockatoo owner. We are hoping these adjustments to the law will discourage potential buyers who are not serious about the commitment, and encourage sellers to discriminate between who they do and do not sell cockatoos to. Thank you for your time.

RubaAbbasi

Sent it to Senators Menendez and Lautenberg 04 April 2012

Subject: Appeal for an addition of a responsible pet ownership contract that increases restrictions on buying/selling of cockatoos in New Jersey

Dear Senators Lautenberg and Menendez:

I'm writing to express my concern about the limited restrictions currently implemented on the purchase and sale of exotic birds—specifically cockatoos.

These birds are high maintenance, and require an immense amount of time, attention, and unique care. Most first-time bird owners are unaware of the commitment required to maintain the well-being of these creatures. This could lead to potentially serious risks to both the owner and the bird. The bird may start to pluck its feathers and self-mutilate if it does not receive enough attention. It may become aggressive when handling and squawk uncontrollably. The owner may suffer debilitating bites and scratches. These birds can potentially harm young children or other pets that live in the household. Not to mention, the noise is a nuisance and can certainly pose an issue with neighbors in the vicinity.

I realize there are many pressing issues and difficult decisions that you will face, but I'm asking that you highly consider tightening the regulation on the buying and selling of cockatoos. One such way, would be to draft a responsible pet ownership contract that must be signed by both parties and submitted to the township for documentation. This responsible pet ownership contract will disclose all potential risks associated with owning a cockatoo. The buyer will sign, agreeing that he/she understands the potential harm that can be inflicted upon him/herself, as well as, the bird. The seller will sign, agreeing that he/she believes the buyer is fitting to take on the responsibilities of keeping a cockatoo as a pet.

As a senior at the Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, I can attest to the lack of general awareness about these birds, and the need for education on the proper care and upkeep of them. When the appropriate information is not relayed, both the bird and person suffer.

Respectfully, I urge you to support this cause to tighten the regulations on the selling and buying of cockatoos. Attached is a petition, that is currently ongoing, signed by others who agree with the incorporation of a responsible pet ownership contract. It will benefit the animals and the general population, alike.

Angelina R. Eldekki

Petition link:

<http://cockatoos1.epetitions.net/>