Budgie Behaviour

Why does my budgie bite me?

This is exactly what you should be asking yourself any time your budgie bites. Why is it happening? Is your bird scared? Is she protecting her cage or favorite toy? Is she overly excited?

Once you figure out the cause of the biting, you can figure out how to stop it. Here are some of the more common reasons for biting and how to go about dealing with them:

Fear: If you try to catch an untame budgie in your hands or you have it backed into a corner, chances are it will bite you. This is often the last resort and a budgie that is afraid would much rather get away than bite but if it is left with no other option, you'll be bitten. If you have to catch and/or restrain your budgie it is best to wear gloves so that the bites aren't painful to you and the process is over quickly. The longer you chase your budgie the more afraid it will become. Biting out of fear should never be treated as a behavioral problem but as with all bites, do not react. If you react to biting your budgie will realize that it can cause you to recoil or be afraid by doing so.

Territorial Aggression: This is probably the second most common cause for biting (next to fear biting). Sometimes budgies become very protective over their territory and posessions. In most cases, this includes their cage. A territorial budgie will charge your hand if you try and reach inside the cage and will bite you. This is often accompanied by what I like to call "angry dolphin" noises. They are very high pitched and rapid and generally mean the bird is angry/unhappy about what's going on.

As always, ignore these bites. Budgie bites can hurt but if you react in anyway (pulling your hand back, screaming, cursing, etc.) you'll only be "rewarding" your budgie for its actions. For example, by pulling your hand away you are inadvertantly teaching the budgie that biting works in getting you out of the cage. By screaming or cursing you're still teaching the bird that biting gets a reaction and many birds actually enjoy causing you to screech or flail about! So, don't react to the bites (at least not on the outside).

The next step in trying to discourage territorial aggression is to keep the toys and perches of your bird's cage rotated regularly. Change things up often so that your budgie doesn't get as much of a chance to get used to the setup and lay claim to the cage.

If you notice that the budgie is protective of a particular toy, exchange it with a different one and see if that helps.

If you have the space you can even move the entire cage to a different area of the room so the bird gets a change of scenery.

Hormonal Periods & Molting: Sometimes budgies get cranky as they become young adults and/or when they're molting. This is a phase that will pass with time and again, the most important thing to remember is to ignore the biting.

If you notice your budgie displaying behaviors associated with mating and/or courtship (such as regurgitating food for you, another person, or a favorite toy or attempts to mate with those objects) he/she is probably going through a hormonal period. Rearranging the cage can help curb this behavior and it is also a good idea to reduce your bird to 8-10 hours of daylight if he/she was getting more than that. This is especially important if you have a female budgie who is trying to lay infertile/unwanted eggs as egg laying can lead to egg binding and egg peritonitis which can both be fatal.

If your budgie is behaving differently and you're unable to figure out why, it's a good idea to have him/her seen by your avian vet to rule out illness or injury.

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