General Budgerigar FAQs

To clip or not to clip?

Wing Clipping

Should you or shouldn?t you?This is by far one of the most controversial topics among bird owners and a source of some extremely passionate debate. In order to avoid dealing with hostile arguments and ill feelings among members, we felt it best to present only the facts and let YOU decide your own opinion.

This topic is being written from an unbiased point of view and reviewed by others to try and keep it as fair and fact-based as humanly possible. I am not for wing clipping but I?m also not against it. My opinion is neutral in that I feel that it is up to YOU as a budgie owner to decide what will work best for your bird and situation. The only way for you to be able to make a good decision is to give you the facts without the emotional outbursts of those who (rightfully) defend what they believe.

We are a very friendly group and we respect your opinions but also want to make this topic educational and free from conflict as that would make it extremely hard for a new user to make his/her decision. Most people do not want to read ten pages of bickering and no one should have to do so just to get some simple answers. So, that being said, please respect each other?s opinions if this topic comes up in other places as well!

In this topic you will learn the pros and cons of wing clipping, the pros and cons of not wing clipping, why some people choose to clip wings vs. why others don?t, what a proper wing clip is and how it affects your budgie.

Leaving Your Budgie Flighted

You may have heard that it is impossible to tame a flighted budgie and this is not true! Baby budgies (6-8 weeks of age) are incredibly easy to tame. This is one of the things that makes budgies ideal pets. If you spend plenty of one on one time with your baby budgie it will bond to you quite easily. Older budgies in general are much more difficult to tame but it is not at all an impossible task. No matter what you choose to do, the main priority must be SAFETY! It is best to tame your budgie before allowing it to fly out of the cage. A scared budgie is going to be extremely difficult to catch and put back into its cage, not to mention, chasing it around is just going to add to its fear of you and slow down the taming process.

When allowing your budgie to fly, make sure that the room he is in is completely safe. Some common household hazards to flighted budgies include open doors and windows, hot stoves, candles, fireplaces, ceiling fans (any fan, really), standing water (fish tanks, toilets, sinks, cups/glasses, etc.), toxic houseplants and/or chemicals, mirrors, and other pets. Some of these are obviously just as dangerous to clipped birds.

All precautions must be taken before allowing your bird out of the cage for flight. Make sure everyone in your household is aware of the bird being out and what precautions to take. Close all doors and windows, make sure the stove is off and cool, be sure no candles or fireplaces are burning (scented candles aren?t to be used around birds anyway as the fumes are harmful to their lungs), turn off all fans, cover/drain/remove any source of standing water, remove any toxic houseplants or chemicals that your budgie might be able to find, cover all mirrors so that your budgie can?t fly into them, and make sure that other pets are locked away from where the budgie will be. Generally, do a thorough survey of the area in which your budgie will be allowed to fly and think carefully about what might pose a risk.

Links that discuss household dangers (whether or not your budgie is clipped, these apply):

Harmful Household Items & Other Warnings

Safe Home for Exotic Birds

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Parrot Chronicles.com Hazards

Bird Proofing Your Home

Safe & Dangerous Plants

Some Pros and Cons of owning a Flighted Budgie

Pros:
? Flight is great exercise and budgies are prone to obesity so it?s very healthy for them.
? Budgies that are tamed and allowed flight are generally more outgoing and confident.
? If you own other pets (especially dogs and cats) your budgie has a better chance of escaping them in the unfortunate event that the dog or cat is accidentally let into the room with the budgie. (Obviously, you should try to avoid this at all costs but accidents do happen.)

Cons:
? There are many added safety concerns in keeping a flighted budgie, such as the bird escaping through an open door or window.
? Older budgies are often more difficult (though not impossible) to tame when left flighted.

Having Your Budgie Clipped

As you?ll learn, clipped budgies do not fall like rocks. They still have a bit of flying ability. Wing clips do not hurt the budgie in any way when done properly and they should be performed by your avian vet. **(Always let a professional show you how to do it before attempting it yourself! Clipping a blood feather can be fatal so you must be taught how to look for them and where to clip.)**

Clipped budgies are easier to tame as you can more easily use a one-on-one technique away from the cage. Many people don?t feel comfortable with this as you?re forcing the bird to be near you when he doesn?t want to be. On the other hand, you spend less time trying to capture the budgie and more time showing him that you aren?t a threat. Most of them learn fairly quickly not to fear you if you approach them calmly and speak softly.

Wing clipping is not a "solution" to a behavioral problem but a tool in helping you manage the situation until your budgie is trained. In other words, clipping a budgie's wings won't immediately make him more tame or less nippy. It will just make it easier for you to work with him so that you can work on these issues.

Wing clips are not permanent. With your budgie?s next moult you can choose to allow the flight feathers to grow in and he will once again be able to fly. Your budgie will not resent you for the wing clip and will be able to do all the things flighted budgies do (hop from perch to perch, climb, play, etc.) other than fly great distances.

The Proper Wing Clip

You may have heard that clipping your bird?s wings can cause permanent damage to your budgie and/or that it could cause your budgie to never be able to fly again. This can be true and this is why you must educate yourself before deciding to have your budgie?s wings clipped. If they are clipped properly, these will not be issues. A properly clipped budgie will suffer no long-term effects and will regain full flight with its next moult.

With a proper clip, your budgie will not simply fall to the ground like a rock. This could lead to injury and means that the budgie has been clipped far too severely. A properly-clipped budgie can get

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quite a bit of distance before he begins to gradually lose altitude. The higher the starting point, the more distance he?ll be able to ?fly? before finally reaching the ground (or other destination).

The long feathers are on your budgie?s wing are called primaries and these are the feathers that your vet will trim. Secondary feathers should never be trimmed.

In the picture above, you can see the primary and secondary feathers easily on the right wing. This bird is moulting so some of her clipped primary feathers on the left wing have grown back.

How many primaries to clip depends on how well your budgie can fly. Have your vet start by trimming a few first to see how that works. Both wings must be trimmed equally so that your budgie?s sense of balance isn?t thrown off. Only trim as many as necessary and never anything more. Remember that the purpose of a wing clip is not to render your bird completely flightless but to prevent him from gaining too much altitude during flight.

Always let a professional show you how to clip wings before attempting it yourself! Clipping a blood feather can be fatal so you must be taught how to look for them and where to clip.

Breeders should always let their baby budgies to fledge (learn to fly) before allowing them to be clipped.

Some Pros and Cons of Owning a Clipped Budgie

Pros:
? Clipped budgies are often easier to tame than flighted budgies (especially older ones).
? The risk of your budgie getting injured or escaping is greatly reduced if it is clipped.
? Having fewer safety hazards to worry about along with easing the taming process means a clipped budgie may come out of the cage easier and more freqently.

Cons:
? Clipped budgies won?t be able to get the exercise associated with flying.
? A wing trim that isn?t done properly can be very stressful, painful, and/or damaging to your budgie.

In Conclusion

The ultimate priority in this ?debate? is safety. Before everything else, you must consider your personal situation and how safe your home can be made for your budgie whether you decide to have his wings trimmed or leave him flighted. This is why it is so important for you to know these facts, assess your home and decide what will work for you and your budgie. Be sure to take other family members into consideration as well and include them in your decision. After all, they will be involved when it comes to bird proofing your home.

Most people are going to have a very strong opinion one way or the other. While it never hurts to listen to both sides of the argument, make sure you?re properly educated so that you can make the best decision for you and your family. No one else can tell you what is right as none of us know your home or family routine.

Note: This post has been reviewed by moderators and admin staff and people of varying opinions to ensure facts are presented in an unbiased manner. If you wish to discuss wing clipping further or have any questions regarding a proper wing clip please feel free to post a new topic in the main forum area. Thank you

Wing clipping has always been a debate between people. To furthur your education we we encourage you to also read the discussion on our forum To Clip or Not to Clip

Finding an Avian Vet

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