

Bird Toy Safety & Enrichment

There are many toys available on the market sold both online and in pet stores so it is important to know the safety limitations of these toys to prevent accidents, injury, illness and even death.

The most common reasons we see pet birds for toy-related mishaps include heavy metal intoxication (ingestion of metal particles), fibre obstructions (birds who have eaten rope toys or rope perches) and tangling injuries (toes, feet and legs that become entangled in cage toys).

Prevention is always better than treatment. Below is a list of safe toys for your birds and unsafe items around the home that you should avoid, this list is not exclusive but gives you an idea of overall safety for your bird.

Safe:

- New plastic
- Ceramics
- Stainless steel metal
- Powder coated metal
- Untreated leather
- Natural branches, wood, untreated pine
- Native seeds and flowers, gum nuts, nuts
- Cardboard, paper, newspaper, toilet rolls, cereal boxes, recycled paper cat litter

Unsafe

- Fibres and ropes - rope toys, rope perches, rope attached to toys, material huts, cotton, plastic rope
- Natural fibres - sisal, hemp, coconut fibre and seeds for planting
- Jewellery, stationary, bread ties, foil, lead clappers inside bells
- Galvanised metal (used in old bird cages and aviaries) including galvanised food and water bowls, nails, clips, padlocks, white rust on galvanised metal
- Hardware (screws, nuts and bolts) - especially a risk for free-ranging backyard chickens
- Fishing tackle, batteries, solder, light bulbs, lead lighting, linoleum, plaster and putty, paint, varnishes, lead pellets from firearms, electrician cable clips, mirror backing, stained glass windows, coins, wire used as hangers for chew-sticks, shiny silver coating on cage bars.

In the wild birds spend much of their day foraging for food, therefore in captivity enrichment can be provided by encouraging natural foraging behaviours to keep your clever bird's brain busy. This also encourages exercise and increases physical activity which helps to reduce the occurrence of self-mutilating behaviours such as feather plucking. It is a great idea to incorporate materials from the "safe" list into home-made toys, and foraging and enrichment activities for your bird. You can also scatter food in a 'foraging tray' with recycled paper cat litter in a cat litter tray to encourage the bird to spend time and brain power finding food.