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VCA Veterinary Referral Associates Avian & Exotics Department Guidelines for Referring Veterinarians

Dear Referring Veterinarian,

Welcome to our Avian and Exotics Department at VCA Veterinary Referral Associates. These guidelines will help to acquaint you with our avian and exotic animal medical, surgical and emergency service and provide information to help inform your clients and schedule appointments.

Dept. Veterinarian	Lisa Carr, DVM
Department Hours/Days	11 AM—6 PM, Mondays through Fridays
Hospital Emergency Dept.	Open 24 hours, 7 days a week (see below)

Scheduling appointments

Appointments are typically scheduled during our office hours in 60-minute increments. Please either fax or send the owner with all pertinent medical records, blood work, and radiographs. Referral and pet history forms are available on our website www.vcavra.com. You are welcome to call and discuss the case prior to transfer. For assistance with appointments and records transfer, please call or email the Avian & Exotics Department Liaison Mary Yonemura at 301-926-3300, mary.yonemura@vcahospitals.com.

Emergencies

We accept emergency cases 24 hours a day. If the Exotics Department is not available when an unstable patient arrives, they will be admitted through the Emergency Department. If time permits and the patient is stable, he or she will be admitted directly through the exotics department. If you would like to refer an emergency after hours, please call our Emergency Department, which is open 24 hours a day. One of our doctors is on call at all times.

Telephone Communication

If you call about a possible referral and you must leave a voice mail message, someone from the Exotics Department will return your call as soon as possible. Again, if you need to transfer a case quickly, you can call or have that patient admitted through the Emergency Department.

Thank you for your continued confidence and trust in our hospital. Please don't hesitate to let us know if you have questions or need assistance at any time.

Lisa Carr, DVM
Avian and Exotics Department

VCA Veterinary Referral Associates

Avian & Exotics Department Guidelines for Referring Veterinarians

Following are general guidelines to help determine level of urgency for medical treatment of avian and exotic pets. It is important to note that birds and exotic animals are often much sicker than they appear because, as prey species, their nature is to hide signs of illness. For this reason, it is important to encourage an owner to bring their pet in, rather than waiting to see if it will get better. Please feel free to call us at (301) 926-3300 with any questions.

NEEDS TO COME IN SAME DAY OR ASAP

RABBITS, RODENTS AND GUINEA PIGS

- Not eating/not defecating for the last 12 hours
- Weak, not moving, feels cold to the touch
- Seizure-like activity
- Trauma, such as being dropped and now limping not walking, etc.
- Anything eye-related

BIRDS

- “Fluffed up”
- Sitting at the bottom of the cage
- Not eating:
 - small birds 12 hours
 - larger birds 24 hours as long as they are still defecating
- Not defecating
- Seizuring
- Trauma, such as animal attack, etc.
- Laid an egg and now straining to poop or owner thinks it is trying to lay another egg and nothing is coming out
- Feather that is bleeding, i.e. a “blood feather”

REPTILES

- Can't lift body off of the ground (bones/muscle weakness)
- Unresponsive to touch — could be too cold, sick or dead
- Not active and not eating — if not eating and active, could be normal
- Not defecating
- Seizuring
- Amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders, newts) and snakes with red bellies and/or legs — indicates systemic infection

FERRETS

- Unresponsive to stimulus
- Older animal (3-7 years) that has glassy look or staring off into space (could indicate low blood glucose caused by insulinoma)
- Trauma
- Known or suspected ingestion of foreign body
- Vomiting/diarrhea with patient acting lethargic

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NEEDS TO BE SEEN WITHIN 1-2 DAYS

RABBITS, RODENTS, GUINEA PIGS

- Grinding teeth
- Drooling
- Eating soft foods (pellets, greens) but not hay
- Masses (usually abscesses)

BIRDS

- Feather picking that includes mutilating own skin (feather picking without mutilation is not an emergency)

REPTILES

- Behavior changes, e.g. not basking under heat lamp, etc.
- Mites seen

FERRETS

- Hair loss on tail/flanks (adrenal disease)
- Vomiting/diarrhea with patient still being BAR (bright, alert, responsive). Ferrets can catch influenza from humans.

NOTE: **No fasting is necessary** and if an animal is on medications, they should be continued as usual. This is important because most exotic species rely on consumption of food to keep their GI tract moving — if they are not eating, they're at increased risk for GI stasis.