

“Is My Bird Sick?” Series
Part 1-Avian Droppings
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Everybody does it. But birds do a lot of it. What is it? Well, it goes by many names—feces, defecations, stool, poop, and droppings—but it is all still the same. These droppings may provide you with clues about the health status of your bird.

There are normally 3 parts to an avian dropping. The 1st part is called the urates. The urates usually look like a chalky, white liquid. Urates are produced by the liver and excreted by the kidneys. Urine makes up the 2nd part of an avian dropping. The urine, which is produced by the kidneys, should be a clear liquid. The 3rd part is feces. The feces are solid and typically look green in color. The color and consistency of feces may change depending on the kind of foods that are eaten by your bird. The appearance of the droppings may also vary among different bird species or individual birds within the same species.

When should you be concerned that there might be a problem with your bird’s droppings? If you notice any change in the color or consistency of any part of the droppings from the normal appearance. For example, yellow or green urates may be a sign of a liver problem. Feces that are chronically loose could be a sign of diarrhea in your bird. Note whether any parts of the droppings are missing or if additional parts are present.

Stressful situations may temporarily cause your bird to produce mostly watery droppings. However, the presence of undigested food in the droppings is not a normal finding and requires further evaluation. A bird with droppings smeared on the underside of its tail may also be a sign of a sick bird. You can also assess the overall dropping. Is this the usual size of your bird’s dropping? Has your bird produced about the same amount of droppings in a day that they normally produce?

Consider these recommendations for improved viewing of your bird's droppings. Use a flat paper substrate, such as newspaper or paper towel, on the cage bottom. Try to avoid corn cob substrate as this environment may promote the growth of bacteria or fungus. Be aware that colored newspaper may falsely change the color of your bird's droppings. Ideally, the substrate should be changed daily.

Consult your avian veterinarian if you have a concern about your bird's droppings. Be prepared and bring a sample of any abnormal droppings in a plastic baggie to your veterinary visit.