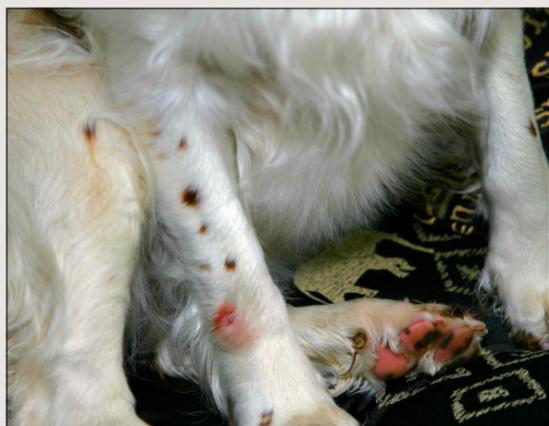


**OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER DISPLAYED IN COMPANION ANIMALS**  
– from page 20

become depressed and is then under pressure. Physical well-being is closely intertwined with our psychological state. It is

usually easier to fight off common infections, such as colds or influenza, when a person is in a happy emotional state.



This dog has developed a lick granuloma on its right front leg due to continual licking. These can become painfully sore.

**Animal OCD**

Companion animals cannot understand changes in ownership or house moves, nor can any particular fluctuating situation be explained to them. It is for this reason that adopted dogs, cats, horses and parrots – even those passed between extended family members – invariably display some signs of stress.

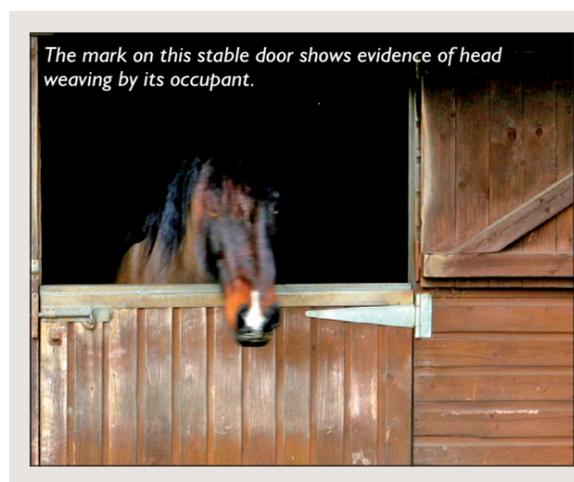
In dogs, the effect of stress and the break in their relationship with individuals can lead to owner attachment problems. In dogs and cats, this change in ownership and moving house (which represents a territorial change to canines and felines) can lead to the development of separation-related disorder. This is where dogs repeatedly bark or even howl, and cats demonstratively cry or spray during owner absence. Some dogs become incredibly destructive in

the home or may toilet indoors.

All companion animals can begin to show signs of these canine obsessive-compulsive disorder (COCD) behaviours when they are stressed, either by problems experienced in the early socialisation period or during some time in their life. In dogs and cats, stress factors can lead to over-grooming, and in tropical birds, feather plucking and a range of abnormal behaviours.

In equine cases, stress can lead to extreme behaviours that include head-weaving, stable door chewing or teeth grinding that leads to neck, mouth and tooth damage.

In avian cases, stress-related behaviours, such as over-preening, can result in a rather sad-looking, bald parrot. Dogs chewing and licking excessively can develop infected limbs, severe fur loss and bald patches and,



The mark on this stable door shows evidence of head weaving by its occupant.

in rare, chronic cases, seizures.

In one of my most memorable cases of canine obsessive and compulsive behaviour it was possible to observe a young German shepherd dog, as it began tail-chasing, almost immediately develop a pre-seizure state and collapse. This acute exhibition of behaviour – often seen as amusing to family members – became extremely distressing to observe. The dog had been re-homed within the family by the adult son to his parents and the break in this attachment triggered the condition.

In feline presentations of the condition, cats have been known to groom to such an extent that fur loss and dermatological deterioration occurs. In some cases, where blood tests eliminated physical causes, the feline obsessive-compulsive disorder (FOCD) condition could be linked to withdrawn behaviour.

**Repeat that**

All the repetitive behaviour performances that have been mentioned are known as stereotypical behaviours, and the eventual therapeutic effect that follows

calms the animal's brain. This is how companion pets deal with stress. However, continual licking, chewing and grooming can lead dogs or cats to developing lick granulomas or growths that can become painfully sore and eventually dangerous to health. Because the licking, chewing and grooming behaviour helps to create calmness, this, in turn, makes

**“Zoo-bound bears, tigers or lions can be observed performing self-rewarding behaviours as they pace from one side of the enclosure to another.”**

performing the behaviour even more necessary. It is known from research that the area, or reward centre, in the mammalian brain that is involved in feel-good hormones, such as serotonin and dopamine,

also deals with fixated behaviour, addiction and compulsion.

Zoo-bound bears, tigers or lions can be observed performing self-rewarding behaviours as they pace from one side of the enclosure to another. This type of stereotypical behaviour creates a natural inner calmness. Any repeated, uncomplicated movements – in these cases backwards and forwards – helps to put the mind at rest and deals with stress. Back home in the “human zoo”, when a person glides an iron backwards and

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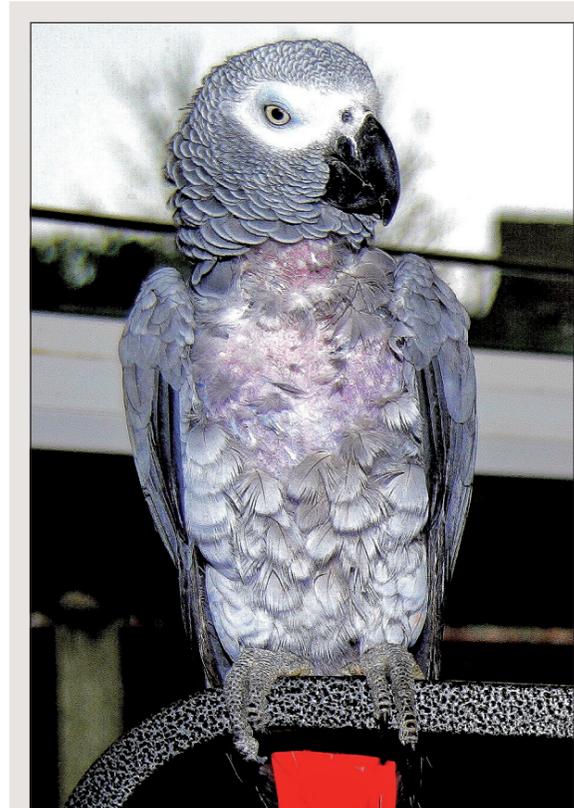
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This parrot's over-plucked chest is a stress-related behaviour.