

## **Winter Heating**

By Fern Van Sant, DVM

For the Birds

1136 South De Anza Blvd, Suite B.

San Jose, CA 95129

<http://www.forthebirdsdvm.com/>

Winter is a cozy time of year. As the temperature outside drops, we shut the windows, turn up the heat, light a fire in the fireplace, and light a scented candle or two to set the mood. We love to include our pets in the fun; we share our holiday treats with them, and buy them new toys and playthings.

While your dog or cat are thrilled to curl up in front of the fire with you and enjoy the warmth, your bird is most likely dismayed at all the changes. Instead of warm and cozy, your bird is more likely feeling snuffly and sneezy. The dry air from your central heating is leaving his sinuses parched. The wood smoke, candles and potpourri are leaving his eyes and nose inflamed, and his breathing wheezy. Instead of enjoying all the changes, he's thinking wistfully of spring!

There are many things that you can do to make the holidays a better time of year for your bird. Turning down the heat, and making sure your bird's cage is far away from heater vents, will help a lot. Cleaning out your heater vents and air filters will reduce his exposure to airborne dust. Lots and lots of showers will help keep the mucous membranes in his sinuses from getting dry and irritated. Keeping him far away from any smoke, and opting for clean air instead of air fresheners and scented candles, will go a long way towards keeping him healthy. And whenever possible, open a window or get him outside for some fresh air and sunshine.

The holidays are a great time of year. Indulge your bird with some fun new wood toys to chew up, or a slice of pomegranate to demolish. Buy him a new UV light to replace all that sunlight he's been missing (remember, the bulbs need to be replaced annually!). Replace those old wooden perches. And don't forget a nice cozy... snuggle.