

Bird Safety Corner



Petroleum Solvents

This month we will explore the exciting world of petroleum solvents. If anyone is still reading, it is important to know what they are and how they can harm your birds (and you too!).

Petroleum solvents are hydrocarbon mixtures derived from, you guessed, it petroleum. They are ubiquitous in various household products and give off volatile organic compounds, also known as VOC's, such as formaldehyde. Remember that something can give off VOC's without having an odor, so something is not safe just because you can't smell it. VOC's are known for their toxic effects on the skin and nervous system in humans and most animals, and are particularly hazardous to birds. Small amounts of exposure can be rapidly fatal.

Unfortunately petroleum solvents can be difficult to avoid. A big category is paints. These will be discussed next time. Here is a list of common household products with petroleum solvents. Remember that this list is by no means inclusive.

- Carpets (including the glue used to secure the pad underneath)
- Carpet and upholstery protectants
- Leather protection sprays
- Furniture polishes
- Paints
- Paint stripper
- Paint thinner
- Wallpaper
- Vinyl tile
- Linoleum
- Plywood
- Particle board
- Lacquer
- Varnish
- Glue



Try to avoid using any of these products around birds. There are many low and no-VOC products out there which can be substituted, so do your research carefully for everyone's benefit.

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