Wing Trimming Guide
ASSOCIATION OF AVIAN VETERINARIANS
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Untrimmed psittacine feather pattern
- Numbers 1-10 are the primary flight feathers.
- The secondary (S-1 to S-10) flight feathers are those between P-1 and the body, and should not be trimmed.
- Primary coverts cover the base of the primaries and the secondary coverts cover the base of the secondaries.

- The flight feathers are numbered from the inside-out, 1 through 10. There is a natural break in the direction of the feathers with the feathers of the manus (primaries — P-1 to P-10) angled out, and the feathers on the brachium and antibrachium (secondaries — S-1 to S-10) angled in.
- Trim so that the cut edge is hidden under the primary coverts.
- The general rule of wing-trim is that the heavier-bodied a bird is, the fewer feathers are removed.
- Secondaries should never be trimmed.
- Flying ability should be tested in the clinic prior to the bird being sent home. Flight distance should be limited to less than 25 feet, and lift to under two feet. This chart is a beginning point for trimming. Additional feathers can be trimmed after a flight test if necessary.
- NEVER TRIM THE TAIL FEATHERS

Long-tailed, slim-bodied birds (cockatiels, macaws, Indian rose-ringed, Quakers, etc.) usually require trimming of feathers P10-P5 (both wings). Especially strong flyers may also need P-4 trimmed. More feathers can be trimmed after indoor testing. Do not trim past P-1.

Heavy-bodied, short-tailed birds such as Amazons, African Greys, or lovebirds usually require trimming of feathers P10-P6 (on both wings). Birds should then be tested for flying ability. It is usually not necessary to trim past P4 for heavy-bodied birds.

Bird-claw scissors are ideal for trimming wing-feathers. There are more substantial types of scissors, shorter-handled and stubbier-bladed, that are better for large feather-shafts. The hooked tip enables one to catch only the feather-shaft for trimming, thus ensuring a safer procedure.