



# *Paws, Claws & Wings*

*Physical and Behavioral Rehabilitation for Animals*



## Marmoset aggression

Marmosets are very social animals that should never be kept alone. A marmoset's usual social group is a family unit, consisting of an alpha breeding pair and older offspring, who assist the breeding adults with rearing the newborns. Marmosets display a variety of aggressive and submissive behaviors. The most common forms of aggression seen in marmosets are resource guarding aggression (involving mates, territory, social status and food) and sexual aggression. These forms of aggression are often exacerbated in a captive environment and are rarely as obvious in a natural environment. Marmosets are very visually orientated so facial expressions, piloerection and moving of the ear tufts are very important displays.

## Aggression and submission

Aggressive displays include:

- frowning
- piloerection
- staring
- ear tuft flicking
- baring the teeth

Submissive displays include:

- submissive facial expressions
- avoidance
- flattening of the ear tufts
- cringing



A black eared marmoset baring his teeth, showing aggression.

# *Paws, Claws & Wings*

*Physical and Behavioral Rehabilitation for Animals*



A white eared marmoset with flattened ear tufts showing submission.

## Resource guarding aggression

Pet marmosets will often defend their territory / cage very ferociously and will bite severely if someone attempts to remove them. This is also linked to fear aggression as this marmoset feels threatened but cannot retreat so reacts in the only other way possible, by defending itself. They will also scent mark, using urine and faeces. Due to the fact that pet marmosets are unable to forage, they often begin protecting and defending their water and food bowls as this is the only way they can feel in control of their resources.

## Sexual aggression

As a single pet in a home, a marmoset does not have the option to mate and this unfulfilled need leads to frustration that the marmoset has no natural outlet for. This will lead to excessive masturbation, an activity owners find distasteful and resource guarding of the primary caregiver. Often these marmosets begin to behave aggressively to other humans, subjecting them to outright attacks of pure rage and even attacking their favoured owner. Males often express sexual aggression in a more violent manner with lots of displays and warnings whereas females will become more grouchy and moody and often attack unprovoked.

Sr Emmylou Rivers