

BASIC BIRD CARE

There are countless good reasons that a bird can make a good pet, but prospective owners should research to find the species of bird that will best fit their lifestyle. Each species has their own personalities. Proper handling is critical to the prevention of behavioral issues.

Smaller parrots can live to 30 years or more, while larger ones (Amazons, African Grey, cockatoos, macaws) can live beyond 60 years. So, commitment to these extraordinary pets needs to be into perspective. Providing for these birds in a will is highly recommended. Quality time should be spent with the bird every single day! Their day starts at dawn and usually ends at dusk. These birds are highly intelligent and very sensitive emotionally and physically.

Diet

Most pet birds fall into two categories: hard-bills (seed eaters) and hook-bills (with parrot-like beaks)

Hard-Bills: Canaries, finches have small bills and need a small seed mix. They should also have available green leafy veggies, as well as apples or oranges. Discarded seed hulls should not be mistaken for seed that isn't eaten. Seed should be changed daily or hulls should be blown out from bowl.

Hook-Bills: Hook-bills eat seed often to the exclusion of healthier food. Seed alone is deficient in many nutrients such as vitamin A, and calcium, and they are also too high in fat. Fruits and veggies are appropriate. An occasional shelled, unsalted nut is good. For large parrots, unshelled almonds, walnuts are good. Pelleted/formulated diets are available and recommended. These tend to be source of well-balanced nutrition. However, many birds that have started out on a seed diet are reluctant to switch

to pellets. The bird should have pellets as the "base" diet of at least 50-60%. Many pellet manufactures publish a feeding schedule on the bag/container, for making the switch.

Calcium is essential. Cuttlebone or mineral block should be available at all times. A well-balanced diet would work as well, but not all birds eat what you want them too.

NOTE: Chocolate, onions, apple seeds and avocado can be toxic to birds.

Housing

Birds should be housed indoors. Appropriate temperature is 60-80 degrees. They should be placed in a location for interaction, free of drafts and excessive sunlight. Cage should be as large as afforded by space and finances. Length is crucial as the bird should be able to fly perch to perch especially for hard-bills.

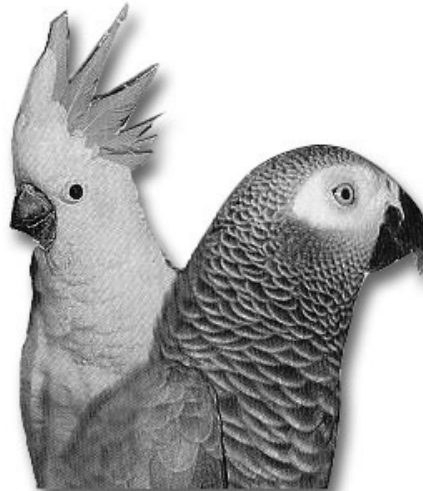
Bar spacing and orientation:

Appropriate spacing is critical to prevent injury. For larger parrots the bars should have a horizontal orientation since they do a lot of climbing. Perches should be of variable circumference to allow for more comfort and choice of where to sleep and as high off the floor of cage as possible.

For both fun and health, birds should have plenty to do. Toys should be available that they can manipulate, climb on, chew up, or hide in.

Behavior

To avoid behavioral problems, you should never isolate birds. You should plan to interact with them often. Appropriate cage size, and diet are very important for behavioral health.



Recommendations from
**The Governor's Commission
on the Humane Treatment of Animals**



Veterinary Care

An avian veterinarian should be located and selected. Birds need a yearly physical to include beak inspection and care and claw trimming.

PRECAUTIONS

Fumes from cooking with teflon or non-stick cookware can be fatal to some birds. Scented candles, air-freshers, scented oils, and cigarette smoke are a health hazard to birds.

Parrots and other birds are attracted to shiny objects and jewelry and may damage it. Parrots and large birds can bite through fingers.

Possible Signs of Illness, Negligence or Intentional Cruelty

Appearance of Animal

Feathers fluffed up (indicates fever, illness, or that room temperature is too low.); hard to tell if emaciated, but best indicator is to feel the bird's breast bone to determine if it is too prominent.

Housing Conditions

Overcrowding (weaker birds bullied and pecked by dominant ones); filthy cage; no fresh water or food.

Behavior

Dull, minimally responsive, not interested in surroundings, depressed; drooping; feather plucking; "hunched" with feathers fluffed.

Reporting Animal Cruelty

Suspected animal cruelty should be reported to the police department of the town in which the cruel action or neglect occurred. Caller should leave name and contact information for a follow-up response.

Additional Resources

Basic Pet Bird Care and List of Avian Veterinarians

www.aav.org/page/basiccare

Pet Bird Care

lafeber.com/pet-birds

Bird Care Sheet

www.neacha.org/brochures/caresheet_bird.pdf



For more information about animal cruelty, visit
www.nh.gov/humane