



## **Bird Care**

### **Activity**

Most pet birds are intelligent, active animals whose psychological needs must be identified and addressed. Locate the cage near family activity in the home.

For some species, opportunities may be provided for exercise in the form of supervised freedom from the cage or flying in the home. If the bird is permitted to fly, be aware of ceiling fans, large windows, and hot pans on the stove, sticky fly strips, and open doors.

### **Toys**

Toys are useful as mental diversions and tend to encourage physical exercise and beak wear; however, they must be selected with safety of the bird in mind.

“Chewable” items include branches, pinecones, rawhide chews, natural fibre rope, and soft white pine.

Many enhancements can be provided to occupy the bird’s attention. Some birds like to tear paper and enjoy a cardboard roller from toilet paper. A piece of corn on the cob or pomegranate is entertaining for birds. Even branches with leaves placed on or against the outside of the cage for the bird to pull through the wires is “occupational therapy.”

Other enrichments include training, foraging, and human interactions.

### **Housing**

The largest cage that can be accommodated in the home is recommended for birds that are expected to be confined most of the time. The cage must be strong enough to resist bending or dismantling by the bird, made of nontoxic material, and designed for safety and ease of cleaning. In most cases, the cage would need to be wider than it is tall to accommodate stretched wings; however, ample height should be provided as well for long-tailed birds.

## **Perches**

Perches can be purchased, or made of clean, pesticide-free natural wood branches. (Willow) Perches provide a place to stand, and for some species that love to shred and destroy, a source of enrichment. Perches should be replaced frequently when they become worn, soiled or damaged. Place perches on opposite sides of the cage for species that fly or hop. More perches can be provided for more agile climbers, like parrots. Perches should be placed so that droppings do not fall into water dishes, and the tail does not rub the side of the cage or fall into food or water dishes.

## **Food and water bowls**

The use of wide bowls rather than deep cups displays the food attractively and may encourage the bird to eat new items. Healthy birds can easily approach the food and water bowls; therefore, it is not necessary in most cases to place bowls directly beside the perch. Birds often overeat or chew on food dishes out of boredom. Placing the food at the opposite end of the cage from the water will ensure that the bird gets some exercise between eating and drinking. It is recommended to have two sets of dishes so one set can be cleaned while the other is being used. Foraging is a great addition to food bowls to help prevent boredom in birds.

## **Hygiene**

A daily cleaning of the cage floor and bowls helps to prevent problems with food spoilage and permits the owner to inspect the cage floor. Blood on the floor or unusual condition of droppings can alert the owner to potential signs of illness. A weekly thorough cleaning of the cage is suggested.

## **Cage liners**

Newspapers, sandsheets or other plain cage liner paper may be preferred over wood chips, chopped corn cobs, kitty litter, or sand as cage substrate under the grating, so that the appearance and number of the droppings can be monitored on a daily basis. Birds should not be allowed direct contact with the substrate as it tends to grow bacteria and fungus.

## **Suitable diet**

A proper diet is critical for overall health in every species. The easiest way to feed is to use commercial formulated diets especially made for pet birds. Homemade diets can be considered, but are time consuming and should be developed with the aid of a professional nutritionist. Birds' dietary needs vary somewhat with species.

Clean and fresh tap water should be provided on a daily basis. Water drinkers are useful as they are less likely to be used by the bird for bathing and it is easier to observe how much the bird is drinking. They are also less likely to become contaminated with faeces.

Parrots are very messy eaters and will often drop their food into the water to soften it, or maybe just for fun so placing a separate bowl for this might prove useful. They will have to be provided with stainless steel open bowls.

## **Food**

The foods birds eat in the wild are dependent upon the season and their availability. Naturally it is therefore highly varied, both over the year, but even throughout each day. It is therefore essential to ensure that there is equal variety in your pet bird's diets.

Birds have a poor sense of smell and only a few taste buds. Their food selection depends more on texture, shape, size and colour. Often, they will reject novel foods until they have recognised it as being a food. For that reason, when changing your bird's diet, always do it slowly, as abrupt diet changes can lead to starvation as the bird will refuse to eat it. However, they are inquisitive and so it is possible to vary their diets successfully.

In the wild feeding takes up a large part of a bird's day. Finding new food sources acts both as physical and mental stimulation, so it is a good idea to try to mimic this in captivity. Providing a variety of foods, fed in a variety of different ways, all helps keep your bird happy and healthy.

Although birds do have high metabolic rates their diet needs to be high in calories. The average pet parrot does not do much exercise and so their requirements are much less than you might think. It is important to portion control the amount of food, especially seeds and nuts that you feed your bird, to ensure that it does not get fat and develop other problems such as fatty liver disease.

To reduce the risk of faecal contamination, place the food containers above floor level and never under a perch. A food container with a larger surface area, allows for easier selection of different food items.

Feed your bird twice a day. Whilst they will pick through their food throughout the day, they will tend to eat their favourite foods first, such as sunflower seeds, but then eat the healthier balanced other parts later. Try offering them a mix of fruit and vegetables for breakfast, then remove this at tea time offering them a mix of seeds and nuts.

## **Fruit and Vegetables**

Fruit and vegetables act as a good source of both vitamins and minerals for your bird as well as providing both emotional and mental enrichment. They should always be part of your birds' diet. For the smaller pet birds, fruit should be offered in very small quantities. Try hanging leaves of Romaine lettuce, or other vegetables, from the roof of the aviary for them to try.

Banana should only ever be fed in very small quantities if at all, as it is high in phosphorous and very low in calcium. Birds can become very addicted to bananas and it can lead to metabolic bone disease.

## **Sickness and Mite control.**

I fully recommend Guardian Angel as the best sick bird product on the market. Probably the most advanced sick bird supplement for over a decade. It provides immune support, prebiotics, vitamins and minerals plus long-term energy. Guardian Angel combines unique ingredients that assist the immune system to act quickly and effectively when the bird is invaded by any infectious germ.

Most sick birds tend to fluff their feathers and often sleep with their head turned over their shoulder. These symptoms can be caused by hundreds of different illnesses so it isn't much help for diagnosis but it is usually the first sign of illness. Our usual recommendation is to separate the sick birds if possible and put them into a warm environment. The quicker that you give such birds Guardian Angel the better. This product will provide energy (fluffing feathers is an effort to maintain body warmth), help maintain the birds water balance, provide support for the digestive system and give the immune system. In our opinion this approach is far more likely to work than giving broad spectrum antibiotics.

## **Guardian Angel key Features:**

- Supports the immune system which fight invaders like bacteria and viruses.
- Supports the digestive system (pre and probiotics).
- Contains electrolytes to help with dehydration risks.
- Provides long lasting energy to help birds who are feeling off their food.
- Ideal for use after using antibiotics.
- Suitable for all cage and aviary birds including pigeons and poultry.

## **Application:**

In water: 20g per litre or 1 level tsp per 150mls or 4 pinches per 50 mls.

***\*\*Any sick bird needs to be kept much warmer than usual\*\****

## **S76**

S76 is the best mite treatment you can buy, it is supplied by a website called fab-finches. S76 can treat mites, fleas, worms, scaly face and allsorts of mite infestations. It can be administered to the drinking water and should be given for 3 consecutive days with a break for several days then reapplied over the course of a month to make sure all the mites are fully eradicated. I can supply more information if requested but also can be found on the fab-finches website.

## **Security**

Many birds benefit from the availability of a retreat inside the cage for a sense of privacy (e.g., paper bag, towel, nest box). However, for some birds these recesses can be perceived as nesting cavities. If this seems to be occurring, visual security can be provided by surrounding the cage area with furniture, real or artificial plants, or other visual barriers.

## **Temperature**

A healthy bird can tolerate temperatures that are comfortable to its owner. Sudden changes in temperature may be a potential threat to a sick bird.

## **Humidity**

Pet birds can adapt to a wide range of humidity levels, although bird's native to subtropical climates may benefit from occasional increased humidity in the home (e.g., in the bathroom with a running shower, or frequent misting of the feathers with water).

## **Light and Fresh Air**

Opportunities for supervised access to fresh air and direct sunlight (not filtered through glass or plastic) appear to be beneficial, as long as shade is available.

## **Grooming**

Routine grooming consists of nail trimming. For healthy birds, nails are trimmed as needed, when they become sharp and uncomfortable for the owners. This can be done with nail clippers but preferred option is purchasing a concrete perch or sandsheet perch covers and the bird will naturally keep them trimmed. Wing clipping should be considered carefully. Wings are generally clipped to prevent escape or injury in the home, for example to prevent flying into windows or ceiling fans. Training is sometimes easier when wings are clipped. However, some owners choose not to clip the wings and allow free flight. The free flight area must be chosen carefully and "bird proofed" to prevent injury.

During moult, older feathers are lost, and new feathers develop to take their place. As the new feather emerges, the bird may groom at the covering of the feather. This is normal behaviour and should not be mistaken for “feather picking” or mites.

Leg bands/Rings can be removed, if desired but they are made by proper companies that specialise in bird rings and are used by many breeders for the birds own identity. They should be checked regularly for accumulation of dirt or wounds beneath the band, or swelling above or below the band.

Most birds enjoy daily bathing, and spend a great deal of time keeping the feathers in prime condition. Some will bathe in a dish or bowl, some prefer a shower or bathing under the shower head. If the bird resists any form of bathing, a daily misting with clean water will help encourage normal grooming. Plain water is best for misting and bathing. If feathers become unusually soiled, mild baby shampoo, followed by careful rinsing can be used.

### **Bird Feed List**

- **Budgies**
  - Budgie seed
  - Millet Spray
  - Plain Canary Seed
  - Vegetables
  - Water
  
- **Cockatiels**
  - Small Parakeet seed
  - Plain Canary Seed
  - Rolled Oats
  - Millet Spray
  - Vegetables
  - Water
  
- **Large Parakeets**
  - Parrot Seed
  - Large Parakeet seed
  - Apple
  - Sweetcorn
  - Mixed Vegetables
  - Water
  
- **Small Parakeets**
  - Small Parakeet seed
  - Millet Spray
  - Apple

Sweetcorn  
Mixed Vegetables  
Water

- **Parrots**

Parrot Seed  
Apple  
Dried fruit  
Mixed Vegetables  
Sweetcorn  
Water

## **GOOD FRUITS AND VEGETABLES INCLUDE**

Apples, Apricots, Blackberries, Cherries, Grapefruit, Kiwi, Melon, Mangoes, Oranges, Pineapples, Pears, Papaya (peeled), Plums, Pomegranates, Tomatoes, Strawberries and Satsumas.

Cabbage, Celery, Carrots, Green Beans, Cucumber, Corn on the Cob, Turnips, Peas in the Pod, Water Cress, Brussel Sprouts, Kale, Broccoli, Spinach and Cauliflower.

**DRIED FRUIT CAN ALSO BE GIVEN, TRY;**

Sultanas, Raisins, Papaya, Coconut, Apricots or Bananas.

**NEVER give Avocado to your bird as it is poisonous.**