



A Private Charity Since 1881

Bird Care Sheet

Care sheets provide basic information only. We recommend purchasing a book about your new bird and seeing a local avian veterinarian for a wellness exam after adoption.

Basic Information

Species	Avg. Lifespan & Size	Housing	Diet
Cockatiel	10-25 years 11"-14" long	House alone or in pairs. Habitat for one cockatiel should be 18"W x 18"D x 24" H, with metal bars spaced no greater than ½" apart.	Specialized pellets should make up 60-70% of diet, along with fresh vegetables and fruits and small amounts of fortified seeds. Many cockatiels are used to a seed-heavy diet; transition gradually onto a pellet food.
Dove	10-20 years 7 ½" -12" long	House alone or in small groups. Habitat should be 24"W x 24"D x 24"H, with metal bars spaced no greater than 3/8" apart.	High quality, fortified seed mix should make up 60-70% of diet, along with fresh vegetables and fruits.
Finch	5-10 years 3"-8" long	Must be kept in pairs or preferably small groups. Habitat for up to three finches should be 24" W x 14" D x 18"H, with metal bars spaced no greater than 3/8" apart.	Specialized pellets should make up 60-70% of diet, along with fresh vegetables and fruits and small amounts of fortified seeds. Many finches are used to a seed-heavy diet; transition gradually onto a pellet food.
Lovebird	15 years 5"-7" long	House alone or in pairs. Habitat for 1-2 lovebirds should be 18"W x 18"D x 24"H, with metal bars spaced no greater than 3/8" apart.	Specialized pellets should make up 60-70% of diet, along with fresh vegetables and fruits and small amounts of fortified seeds. Many lovebirds are used to a seed-heavy diet; transition gradually onto a pellet food.
Parakeet (Budgie)	7-15 years 7" long	House alone or in small groups. Habitat should be 18" W x 18"D x 18"H, with metal bars spaced no greater than ½" apart.	Specialized pellets should make up 60-70% of diet, along with fresh vegetables and fruits and small amounts of fortified seeds. Many parakeets are used to a seed-heavy diet; transition gradually onto a pellet food.
Small/Medium Parrot	20+ years 10"-13" long	House alone or in pairs. Habitat should be 30"W x 30"D x 36"H, with metal bars spaced no greater than ½" apart.	Specialized pellets should make up 60-70% of diet, along with fresh vegetables and fruits and small amounts of fortified seeds and nuts.

- Different species of birds should **not** be housed together.
- Solo birds will require more human attention.
- If males and females are housed together, breeding or fighting may occur.
- Even if your new bird appears healthy, if there are other birds in the home your new bird(s) should be isolated from them for at least six weeks.
- Use bird-safe products only (cages, dishes, toys, cleaning products, etc.) Exposure to chemicals, fumes, or heavy metals (lead and zinc) can be deadly to birds.
- Always wash your hands after handling a bird or cleaning its dishes, cage, toys, etc.

Diet and feeding

- Fresh food and clean, filtered, chlorine-free water should always be available.
- Change water and remove old food daily.
- Vegetables and fruits not eaten within a few hours should be discarded.
- Do **not** feed birds avocado, fruit seeds, chocolate, caffeine or alcohol as these can cause serious medical conditions. Avoid sugar and high fat treats.
- To avoid contamination, do not place food or water containers directly under perches.

Housing

- Most birds acclimate well to average household temperatures, not above 80°F. Avoid extreme temperature changes.
- The habitat should be off the floor in a well-lit area, away from drafts.
- Do not place habitat in a window with lots of direct sunlight; birds can overheat.
- A flight habitat is strongly recommended. It is best to provide the largest habitat possible.
- A variety of perch sizes is recommended to provide exercise and prevent arthritis.
- Cover the cage at night to allow birds to sleep.
- Clean and disinfect the habitat and perches regularly; replace substrate or habitat liner weekly or more often as needed.
- Replace perches, dishes, and toys when worn or damaged; rotate new toys in regularly.

Health

- A healthy bird should be active, alert and sociable, eating and drinking often, sitting upright on a perch with feathers smooth.
- Sick birds will try to maintain a normal appearance, so be on the lookout for subtle changes.
- A bird that is inactive, sitting with feathers fluffed most of the time, or not eating well may be sick. If you notice these signs, discharge from the eyes or nose, a change in color or appearance of the droppings, or other problems, please see your avian veterinarian right away.
- A bird that is head bobbing, pacing, spinning, rocking or swinging the head or body should be seen by a veterinarian.
- Avoid exposure to air pollutants (cigarette smoke, fumes from over-heated non-stick pans, etc.).
- Birds should be monitored at all times when let out of their habitat. Be aware of hazards such as toxic houseplants, open toilets, mirrors and ceiling fans.
- Your bird should be seen by an avian veterinarian at least once per year.
- Speak to your veterinarian about screening tests for viruses and parasites, blood testing and vaccines.

For more information about caring for your bird, please visit the Resources section of the Association of Avian Veterinarians website at www.aav.org and download their printable handouts.