



CARING FOR YOUR COCKATIEL

ABOUT COCKATIELS

The cockatiel, originally from Australia, makes an excellent, easy-to-care for pet. Cockatiels come in a variety of colors, including gray, lutino (yellow), albino, cinnamon, pied, and pearl white faced. They are also available in combinations of the above color mutations. Playful and loving by nature, they like to sit on your head, shoulders, and hands, and enjoy having their heads scratched. Cockatiels learn to whistle easily and have soft, chirpy voices. They tend to live for 15-25 years.

Cockatiels can be parent raised or hand fed. Although a hand fed bird is typically friendlier, young, parent raised cockatiels can be easily tamed. A cockatiel requires a lot of attention, but in return, your cockatiel will become a lifelong bundle of joy, never failing to amuse and entertain the entire family with its whistles and comical antics. If you do not have the time to dedicate to your cockatiel, allowing them time outside of their habitat multiple times per week, a second same-gender cockatiel may help provide your feathered friend the companionship it needs.

GENERAL CARE

Arrange a visit to a veterinarian who specializes in avian medicine as soon as possible after picking up your new pet. The vet will check and make sure your pet is healthy and can answer any other questions you might have. If bringing a new bird into your home where other birds reside, keep it separate until their veterinary exam.

Allow your cockatiel to bathe twice a week by misting him down using a spray bottle of lukewarm water. Always keep your bird out of drafts, especially while drying.

To begin training your new pet, work with him to accept your finger as a perch. Have him step from one hand to the next. To keep your cockatiel from flying away, ask your pet store or veterinarian to show you how to trim the primary feathers on each wing. These feathers will grow back after molting, so they will need to be trimmed regularly. You will also need avian nail clippers and styptic powder to regularly trim your cockatiel's nails.

When you enter and leave your home, be careful your cockatiel doesn't follow you. If he does get outside, quickly place his cage where he was last seen, with the door open and gently call him.

Call an avian veterinarian immediately if you notice a discharge from your cockatiel's eyes, nose, or mouth; any bleeding; or any change in behavior, activity, fecal droppings, or eating habits.

PREPARING YOUR COCKATIEL'S NEW HOME

When choosing a cage for your cockatiel, allow enough room for him to spread his wings and move about. The cage should be at least 24" in width, but the wider the better. Cockatiels like to fly horizontally, so you want to make sure you are providing enough room for them to enjoy their new home.

The spacing between the bars of the cage should be no wider than 3/4". You don't want the bars to be wide enough to allow the bird to squeeze his head through. A pull-out tray at the bottom of the cage with paper-based litter will make weekly cleaning easier. Do not use corn cob substrate.

For proper foot health, your cockatiel should have multiple perches of varying diameters and textures to enable them to exercise their feet. Provide a variety of toys that can be rotated to keep your feathered friend mentally stimulated and prevent boredom which can lead to feather plucking. Toys and perches with excessive wear should be discarded and replaced to prevent injury.

Food and water receptacles should be located above perches, so it is accessible and protected from bird droppings. All food dishes, cups and feeding devices should be thoroughly cleaned and rinsed as they are refilled. Never use food preparation areas to clean small animal habitats or anything in their habitats. If you clean the habitat in the bathroom, disinfect the area completely afterwards.

The cage is your bird's home and security blanket. It should have sufficient space for climbing and flapping wings, and room for toys, mirrors, swings, bells, chews, hanging treats, fruits, vegetables, perches and branches.

Cockatiels are very social birds, therefore locate their cage in a room with plenty of family activity. Avoid placing the cage near the air conditioning or heating vent, in direct sunlight, or near a stove. **WARNING: The overheating of empty Teflon pots or pans creates fumes that are toxic to birds, potentially fatal.**

A cage cover is helpful when you put your bird to "bed" at night, and a cage stand will help protect your cockatiel from the other pets in your home. Bird playpens can be very helpful during training periods.

Your cockatiel's cage and all accessories should be spot cleaned as needed, with the substrate sifted or changed (depending on what you are using in the cage tray) 2 – 3 times per week. Thoroughly clean the habitat and all accessories using a non-toxic, pet-safe habitat cleaner on a monthly basis.

DIET

Supply your cockatiel with fresh food and water daily. 80% of the diet for your new pet should consist of a commercially prepared pelleted food for Cockatiels. Supplement your cockatiel's diet with specialty foods such as spray millet, vegetables and fruit and treats, but be sure treats do not exceed 10% of their daily diet.

Your cockatiel will also benefit from and enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables such as apple, pear, orange (with peel), carrot sticks, dandelion sprigs, broccoli, and romaine lettuce. Stay away from parsley and watery vegetables like iceberg lettuce and celery. This varied diet will provide your cockatiel with the nutrition and amino acids his high metabolism requires. Be careful not to over-do it because too much fruit can cause diarrhea.

Since your cockatiel's beak is continuously growing, add a cuttlebone or mineral block to give your cockatiel the calcium and essential minerals he needs while helping to keep his beak properly aligned.

Peanuts, peanut butter, sunflower seeds, and safflower seeds should be offered in limited quantities because of their high fat content. Do not feed your bird avocados, chocolate, raw onions, raw meat, raw chicken, moldy foods, or alcohol—these are toxic to birds and can cause health problems.

This information is a basic guide. There are several books and online resources which provide in-depth information on Cockatiels and their care. Contact your veterinarian for additional information.