



CARING FOR YOUR PARROT

ABOUT PARROTS

Parrots are a very old family of bird species, first appearing 40 million years ago. Macaws, cockatoos, African greys, parakeets, cockatiels, lorries, and others are all parrots. Parrots are identified by their large heads and heavy hooked beaks, short and strong necks, short legs, and thick and muscular tongues.

GENERAL CARE

Arrange a visit to a veterinarian that specializes in avian medicine as soon as possible after picking up your new pet. They will make sure your bird is healthy and can answer any questions you might have. Call an avian veterinarian immediately if you notice a discharge from your parrot's eyes, nose, or mouth; any bleeding; or any change in behavior, activity, fecal droppings, or eating habits.

If bringing a new bird into your home where other birds reside, it is best to keep them in separate/solitary housing until their veterinary exam. Keep other animals away from your bird until they are properly introduced or don't pose a danger to your parrot.

Allow your parrot to bathe several times a week with a fine mist, being careful not to soak its feathers. Keep your bird warm and out of drafts while drying.

A playpen is a great way to allow your parrot time out of its cage to exercise and play, however put your bird back in its cage before leaving the house to discourage those that like to chew on furniture, rugs, and electrical cords.

You will need to keep your parrot's nails trimmed- getting into a monthly routine using avian nail clippers, with styptic powder on hand, will help prevent your parrot's nails from becoming too long or sharp.

YOUR PARROT'S NEW HOME

When choosing a cage for your new parrot, larger is better. Birds with long tail feathers should have enough vertical room to keep their tail feathers clear of flooring. The horizontal space should be large enough that their feathers do not touch the sides of the cage when their wings are extended.

A cage with a pullout tray at the bottom facilitates cleaning. If the cage has a grid that separates the tray and cage, most of the bedding material on the market may be used as a tray liner. If there is no grid, paper liners are the best choice. Do not use corn cob as a substrate.

Perches should have different diameters for comfort and exercise of the feet. Natural wood perches from a hardwood tree make excellent perches. There are also commercially produced perches.

Food and water receptacles should be located above the perches, so they are protected from bird droppings.

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

Besides daily human companionship, provide activities and toys that are appropriate for parrots to alleviate boredom and loneliness which can lead to feather plucking. Rotate toys to keep your bird mentally stimulated. Toys and perches with excessive wear should be discarded and replaced to prevent injury.

Put your parrot's cage in a quiet room not near the kitchen, and not in direct sunlight, or near heating or air conditioning vents. **WARNING: Overheating empty Teflon pots or pans creates fumes that are toxic to birds, potentially fatal.**

Parrots require 8-12 hours of sleep, so use a cage cover to provide rest and a feeling of security. During the day, provide full spectrum lighting.

DIET

With the exception of most lorries and lorikeets, the natural diet of parrots consists of fruits, nuts, grains, seeds and flowers of tropical trees. Diet should be varied with 80% a high quality, pelleted diet plus fruits (except avocados), dark green or yellow vegetables. A high-quality seed mix can be offered in moderation. These supplements, along with commercial foods, will satisfy your pet's nutritional needs.

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

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.

TRAINING

A tamed and trained bird makes a better pet. If your bird is not already tame, consider having their wing feathers professionally clipped to initially limit their flying ability. New feathers will grow back as your bird molts, so they will need to be trimmed regularly.

Give your bird time to adjust. Maintain distance between you and its cage while talking softly to help ease initial fears. Offer your bird treats from your hand so they begin to associate you with good experiences. Once your bird is comfortable, you can attempt to scratch its head or offer your hand or a perch for them to step onto. As your bird realizes you mean no harm, it will overcome its natural fear of humans and will begin to trust your display of friendship. Work with your bird daily to create a bond. Never force your bird to do anything while training.

This leads to a human-companion animal bond that will last a lifetime. Once tamed, your bird can be permitted out of its cage to interact with you and your family.

Children younger than 5 years old, people with weakened immune systems, and people 65 years of age and older are more likely to get diseases spread between animals and people (also known as zoonotic diseases); contact your health care provider for more information.

This is a basic guide. There are books and online resources, or contact your veterinarian, for in-depth information.