

## Is this the right pet for me?

One of the great things about being a bird lover is that there are so many different species to enjoy. However, choosing the right bird for you can be a big decision. For example, some species are easily startled and may not be suitable if you have a noisy family home environment. On the other hand, if you live in a small apartment, a bird that needs a large cage to fly around in will also not be appropriate. A noisy bird like a cockatoo may not be popular with your neighbours if you live close to them. Before making your final decision, we recommend talking to other bird owners or breeders and find out as much as you can about your potential pet's needs. Some birds like to live alone, while others are only happy with a partner or living in a small flock. Most birds are very territorial and two males should never be kept in a cage together. The staff at Best Friends Pet SuperCentre will be happy to assist you in selecting the right bird for you.

## Recommended for...

- People with time to spend with their avian Best Friend
- People living in apartments
- Families with children
- Seniors

## Lifespan

Enormous variation depending on the species of bird. Large parrots can live for over 100 years in captivity, while finches live for only 5-10 years. Budgerigars and canaries live for 10-15 years on average.

## Feeding

Some species of birds eat mainly seeds, while others like nectar, fruit, worms or insects or a mixture of different foods. Find out about the best diet for your bird from an experienced bird breeder or from the many bird fancier's books and websites. Most birds need variety in their diet, including some fruit, vegetables or grasses. Provide fresh food and water each day.

Get a water bottle if your bird likes to take a bath in its water bowl. A hooded seed cup will prevent seeds flying all around the cage at feeding times. A cuttlebone in the cage is a good idea. Cuttlebone provides your bird with important nutrients such as calcium and iodine and helps to keep the beak in good condition. Providing access to shell grit helps your bird's digestion and also supplies calcium.

## NEW BIRD CHECKLIST

Here's a list of the essentials you'll need for your new Bird. Please ask any of the Best Friends team to help you with your selections.

### Essential equipment

- A suitable cage or aviary
- Food and water containers
- Perches
- Nest boxes (if you have a breeding pair)
- Cage Cleaning equipment and disinfectant.

### Food

- A supply of bird food, appropriate for your bird
- Shell grit
- Cuttlefish

### Your bird will also love:

A few simple cage toys, such as beads, bells, swings and some wooden sticks/small branches from fruit trees or softwoods for chewing. Avoid mirrors because some birds think their reflection is a rival. Don't give your bird rope toys or anything else that could catch its small toes or legs.

## Special Offer:

# Caring for your Bird



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## Housing

Birds can be housed indoors in a cage or in an outdoor aviary. Get your bird's house ready before you bring your bird home. If the cage has been used previously, thoroughly clean and disinfect everything nonporous and replace porous items such as wooden perches and cuttlebone. The bigger the cage the better and it should be wide rather than tall, since most birds like to fly back and forth. A good way to keep the cage clean is to layer a week's worth (7 layers) of newspaper or paper towels on the cage bottom. Remove 1 layer each day, and completely clean out the cage once a week. You may need to place your bird in a secure, but well ventilated box while you clean the cage. Clean cage feeding pots, perches, drinking bowls and toys in a very dilute solution of disinfectant. After cleaning, rinse everything in clean water and dry thoroughly before returning the parts to the cage. All of the utensils you use to clean your bird's cage should be disinfected after each cleaning and used only for this purpose.

Perches should be of varying size and can be plastic, wooden dowels, or natural branches. If natural branches are used, make sure the wood is non-toxic. Remove all of the buds and leaves and wash and dry the branches thoroughly before putting them in the cage. Sandpaper on perches should be avoided as they can cause sore feet.

The location of your bird's cage can also affect its health and happiness. Keep the cage in a quiet, cool, well-ventilated environment away from draughts and don't move it around too often. Most birds like a sunny window view, as long as there is always a sizable shaded region within the cage. The cage should be at a height between your head and waist, low enough for you to interact well



with your bird but high enough to help it feel secure. Remember that your bird is very sensitive to air borne pollutants such as hair spray, perfume, candles, heated Teflon, cleaning products, heated cooking oils, air fresheners, pesticides and herbicides (remember the canaries used in the old coalmines).

Different birds take different lengths of time to settle into an unfamiliar environment, so keep this in mind when you first introduce your bird to its cage. Keep a close eye on it and take note of its eating habits, droppings and general demeanour. At night, it is a good idea to cover the cage with a cloth so that your bird gets a good, restful sleep and is not disturbed while roosting.

## Grooming

All birds love to preen themselves and keep their plumage in top condition. Provide a birdbath on a regular basis, at least once a week. A plastic enclosed birdbath, which can be temporarily mounted to an open cage door, will contain the splashes to help keep the cage and surroundings clean and dry. Don't leave the old bathwater in the cage as your bird may drink it.

Most birds moult once a year. This is a highly stressful time for your bird, and it will need extra care with its diet and controlling the temperature in its environment.

If your bird's toenails or beak start to grow too long ask at the Team at the OurVet™ counter in store for advice on how to properly care for your bird's claws and beak.

## Exercise

If your bird lives in a cage it will benefit from being let out of its cage from time to time for some indoor exercise and free flying. Before opening the cage make sure the area is safe for your bird: close the windows and doors, protect open fireplaces (even if there is no fire), cover up any houseplants and, most importantly, put the cat and dog out! It is also a good idea to close the curtains and cover up any clear glass to prevent your bird from flying into windows. Make sure you collect and dispose of any droppings and keep it away from food preparation and eating areas. In time, most birds will return to their

cage on their own. If your bird is purchased at a young age, handled often and trained correctly it will not want to fly away. Do not clip your bird's wing feathers as they are an integral part of its body.

## Training

It takes time and patience to earn the trust of your bird. Some birds can be trained to perch on your finger and allow you to handle them gently, particularly if you start training them at a young age, whilst others are happy to admire you from a distance. Birds of the parrot family are excellent mimics and some can be trained to talk, provided you start when they are young and are prepared to give them lots of individual attention.

## Health

Birds are generally very hardy but if you notice any unusual behaviour or signs of illness bring your bird to OurVet™ without delay! Watch out for unusual signs such as excessive sleeping, puffed up feathers, inactivity, sitting on the bottom of the cage, perching on one leg, mucous or crustiness around nostrils or beak, frequent wheezing, coughing or sneezing, loose droppings or feather loss not associated with the moult. If you have any concerns about your bird's health, the Team at the Our Vet™ counter can assist you with veterinary care.

Birds can pass on some infectious diseases to humans so avoid kissing your bird and always wash your hands thoroughly after handling it or cleaning out its cage.

## Responsible pet ownership

In most areas of Australia you are required by law to register your pets. In some cases there are restrictions on the number and types of pets you are allowed to keep. Check with your local government for further information on your rights and responsibilities both to your bird and to your neighbours.