



Home Bird Care guide

Caring for your new companion



Introduction: Birds	3
Choosing Your Bird	
Before you Buy	3
Evaluating a Bird.....	4
Getting Acquainted	4
Transporting Home.....	5
Hand Taming.....	5
Housing Your Bird	
Bird Cages.....	6
Cage Accessories.....	6
Where to Place your Bird's Cage.....	6
Cleaning and Maintenance.....	7
Nourishing Your Bird	
Buying and Storing Food.....	8
Traditional Seed Mixes	8
Seed Diet Supplements.....	8
Tropical Granulated Diets.....	9
Premium Mixed Diets.....	11
Water & Bathing	11
Seed Treats.....	12
Fresh Greens and Fruit	12
General Bird Care	
Letting Your Bird Out of its Cage	13
Nail Trimming.....	13
Bird Toys	13
Health Care	13

You and your bird

Hagen is dedicated to providing quality bird food, treats, cages and accessories. Look for HAGEN products wherever fine bird products are available.

The Hagen Avicultural Research Institute (HARI) has gained a respected international reputation for its work in avian research, nutrition and husbandry. You can read the latest HARI research papers by visiting the HARI website at www.hagen.com/hari.

Hagen also continues to support wild bird conservation worldwide through the World Parrot Trust (WPT)*.

This guide provides useful tips about caring for pet birds. For detailed information about a specific bird species consult your local pet retailer, avian veterinarian or aviculturalist.



* For more information about Wild Parrot Conservation, contact WPT at Glanmor House, Hayle, Cornwall TR27 4HY, United Kingdom

email: canada@worldparrottrust.org

canada: <http://www.canadianparrottrust.org>

email: usa@worldparrottrust.org

main: <http://www.worldparrottrust.org>



Introduction: Birds

Birds are always beautiful sights to behold. Scenes like seagulls gliding without effort or eagles soaring majestically are inspiring to watch. How great it would be to fly like birds!

While we can't take flight like birds, it is possible to keep pet birds and observe their beauty up close. A wide variety of domesticated species are available in many sizes and colors. There are parrot-type birds: budgerigars (budgies, also called parakeets), lovebirds, cockatiels, cockatoos, conures, amazons and macaws, as well as non-parrot-type birds such as canaries and finches. Smaller birds like budgies, cockatiels, canaries and finches are the most common pet birds.

Almost all medium sized parrots now available are captive bred, including quakers, caiques, pionus, and conures. Many of these make fun, intelligent companion birds.

Choosing Your Bird

Before You Buy

As a potential new pet bird owner, you should choose a bird that will best suit your lifestyle. Before you buy, consult with your pet shop retailer about which species will best fit your lifestyle.

The tiniest members of the parrot family, parakeets (budgies), are the easiest to keep. Babies will become quite tame; some can even be taught to talk.

Finches and canaries have the ability to serenade with beautiful melodies. These birds are also generally less messy and independent.

Cockatiels are popular birds that have favorable traits, a nice disposition and can provide companionship for up to ten years or more.

Larger parrot-type birds like cockatoos, amazons and macaws generally crave companionship and need extra exercise and attention. You will need to spend a lot of time with these birds to keep them happy. Left home alone, they often become noisy or depressed.

Evaluating a Bird

When you evaluate a new bird, observe it from a few feet away to see if it's active. A bird that remains motionless for long periods may be ill. Move towards it to see if it shows interest in you.

A healthy bird has clear, bright eyes and clean nostrils. The beak should be clean and well aligned. Feathers should be well preened and evenly distributed without bald patches. Watch for any abnormal breathing or movements as it moves in its cage. Check if its wings are in a normal position. Its chest should be firm and plump when felt through the feathers.

Its droppings must be normal. There should be no remnants of feces near vent feathers. It's always best to obtain a hand-raised bird when purchasing species such as the cockatiel, or larger members of the parrot family. Select a recently weaned youngster that will still accept a bit of food from a spoon. Younger birds on several formula feedings daily can be less resistant to disease and other problems than weaned birds.

Find out what the bird has been eating, such as types of formulated diet, seeds, fresh fruits and greens, treats, vitamins, etc. You'll have to continue to feed the same diet to ease the transition when you take it home. You can alter the diet later if necessary. Ask whether the baby has been examined by a local avian veterinarian and about any health warranties. Adult birds will also benefit from a check-up and may come with health information in the warranty.

Familiarize yourself with what normal droppings look like. If the white crate is tan yellow or greenish, it can be an indication of liver disease. Lack of stool volume can indicate poor consumption of food.

Getting Acquainted

Allow your new bird two or three days to get familiar with its new surroundings. Make sure that it eats regularly and has plenty of fresh water and seeds. Continue to feed it what it was fed at the pet shop to maintain a sense of continuity.

Place the cage in a secure and warm location. Avoid the kitchen. Remove any swings from the cage and place





extra food and water containers on the cage floor (away from overhead perches) until the bird gets used to the cage.

You should take your bird to an avian veterinarian for an initial examination and health information.

Transporting Home

Pick up your new bird as early in the day as possible to give it enough time to get used to its new home in daylight. Transport the bird in a safe carrying container such as a Bird Carrying Box, Stowaway, Pet Voyageur or Pet Cargo Cabrio.

Hand Taming

If your bird has been hand-reared, it will be easier to handle. Some bird species are easier to tame or to keep tame than others. For example, hand-raised, peach-faced lovebirds usually retain better pet qualities than other species of lovebirds. Budgies are generally easier to tame than canaries. Most parrot-type birds, including budgies, have their primary flight feathers trimmed during taming (this will also prevent many

injuries and escapes). Ask your pet shop retailer to clip the feathers for you before you take it home. These will regrow after moulting.

One hand-taming method is to use a safe, small room and carefully remove the feather-clipped pet from the cage. Many cages have a removable bottom to facilitate this. Encourage the bird to step on a wooden perch or stick when placed against the bird's chest or lower torso, using the "up" command. Repeat once or twice daily. Birds will quickly learn to step on the perch.

Next, place your finger or the top surface of your hand in the same position and encourage the bird to step on. Once on your hand or finger, reward the pet with a bit of spray millet, or for larger birds, a sunflower seed. Some birds will enjoy gentle grooming. Be slow in your movements until your bird knows that it is safe to venture into human hands.

Housing Your Bird

Bird Cages

Keep the following in mind when choosing a cage: it should be large enough to house the bird comfortably and safely, strong enough to withstand daily use and easy enough to clean. Bar spacing should be appropriate to the individual bird (no areas for a head or foot to become trapped).

The cage door should allow easy access. The door latch should be secure or located out of the bird's reach.

These are minimum requirements. Most birds should be allowed supervised exercise outside the cage, ideally on a play gym. If you plan to keep your bird in a cage at all times, purchase or build a large flight cage.

Hagen **Bird Cages** are built to meet the highest quality standards and are fabricated using lead and zinc free wire. They are available in a wide variety of styles and sizes to meet your needs.

Cage Accessories

We offer a vast choice of cage accessories to meet the needs of your pet birds.

Seed and water feeders should be placed where they will encourage you to make regular changes. New cages often include swings which you may choose to remove until the bird is used to its new cage. Ladders provide interesting diversion and exercise.

Place perches at different heights and angles. They should have different diameters and textures to exercise the bird's feet and to keep nails groomed. You can use fresh, natural tree branches to supplement standard wooden or plastic perches. Willow, alder, apple, citrus, ash, birch and cedar are all popular, provided they are free of pesticides.

Where to Place your Bird's Cage

Cage location can greatly affect your bird's comfort level. If placed too low, sudden movements overhead can easily scare it. Place the cage at eye level, usually about five feet above the ground. If cats are present, suspend the cage from a ceiling hook rather than a stand.





An overhead lamp or nearby light fixture is often desirable, and is beneficial to the health of your bird.

Find a well ventilated location that is free of cigarette smoke, kitchen fumes or air fresheners. Avoid areas near heaters, fans, air conditioners and wherever there are frequent temperature variations. Never place a cage in the kitchen, as non-stick cookware and smoke can be hazardous.

Most new or young birds enjoy warmth and humidity. Adult birds can tolerate average room temperature much better. Almost all of the pet bird species come from very warm or tropical countries. Moderate sunlight is good, but also provide a shady area for cooling down. When conditions permit, you can place the cage in a warm but shaded outdoor location, under supervision, protected from predators, accidents or theft. Your companion bird cage should be covered at night to ensure the maximum hours of undisturbed sleep necessary for optimum health and behaviour.

Bird owners now opt for a secondary cage, used as a sleeping cage.

Dirty cages, food, water containers, perches, and toys can be breeding grounds for harmful bacteria. Follow a regular cleaning schedule to prevent bacteria from growing and spreading.

Cleaning and Maintenance

Clean cage trays and water containers with soap and hot water every day. Rinse soap off completely. Remove plastic cage bottoms or bases once weekly for a good cleaning. Thoroughly disinfect and rinse the cage at least once a month using a mild cleaning solution.

Gravel Paper simplifies cage maintenance. It should be changed daily to prevent bird droppings from piling up and harmful bacteria from spreading. A **Bird Seed Guard** helps prevent messy seed spills.



Nourishing Your Bird

Buying and Storing Food

The best bird food always provides the best nutrition. For the relatively small amount your bird will consume daily, even the finest quality foods remain economical. Inexpensive or bulk brands are often poorly stored and are not packaged for freshness.

Buy seeds that are free from dust and insects (to achieve this, most food types are packaged in special laminated plastic or mylar bags with an inert gas such as carbon dioxide). Food should be maintained in a cool, dry place, and protected from mice, rats and wild birds. Once packaging seals are broken, store the remainder in a covered container in the refrigerator.

Traditional seed mixes

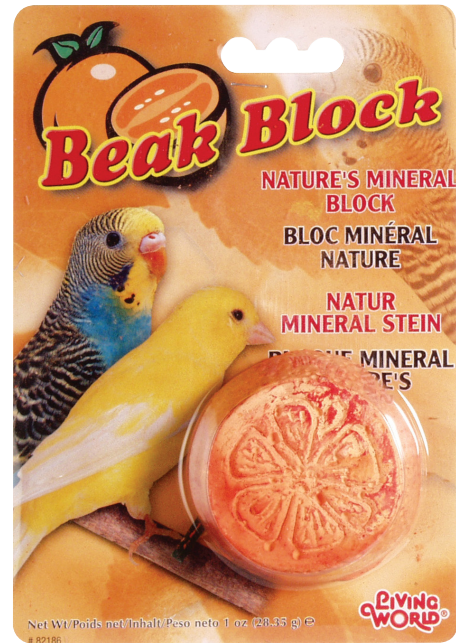
Birds are finicky eaters, often selecting only one or two favorite seed types out of a seed mix. This may lead to an inadequate diet. Pet birds also discard seed hulls and eat only seed kernels (except for pet doves and pigeons), making it difficult to supplement a seed

mix. Vitamin and Mineral Enriched Seeds (VME) not only offer a variety of fresh seeds, they also provide favorite seed kernels (hulled seeds) that are coated with important VME nutrients. As birds consume these familiar morsels, they receive enough vitamins and minerals for maintenance.

Seed Diet Supplements

VME Seeds go a long way in reducing diet deficiency problems. But even with VME, there's no way to ensure that birds will eat all vital nutrients. Malnutrition may result when birds eat only one type of seed and ignore other food sources. Fortunately, the problem can be corrected in a variety of ways.

Prime is a complete dietary supplement that can produce advanced support in stressful situations. Prime contains lysine and methionine that are essential during feather replacement (moulting). It can be used in drinking water, but is preferred sprinkled on food.



Prime easily penetrates or coats foods such as fruit slices, greens, egg food, small seeds and spray millet. Prime delivers 14 vitamins, extra antioxidant vitamins such as C & E, trace minerals such as iodine, and essential minerals such as calcium. Prime is one of the highest calcium supplements available. Special beneficial bacteria help lower the pH of the digestive tract and may help suppress the growth of harmful organisms.

Prime is based on a phosphorous-free, naturally sweet calcium source (calcium gluconate). Calcium deficiency is one of the most common and serious nutritional problems of pet birds. Many ordinary vitamin supplements contain no calcium and use cheaper carriers such as sugar, which adds little to the supplement's potency.

Because a bird's beak grows continually, it must be worn down through regular use or it will create problems. In addition to being an excellent source

of minerals, Cuttlebones and Mineral Blocks provide a convenient way to help birds keep their beaks trimmed. Iodine deficiency is common and serious in pet budgies. Iodine Block provides iodine dietary supplements and should be made available to all budgies.

Tropical Granulated Diets

Because eating habits and selection of favorite seeds largely determine the effectiveness of the diet, bird seed diets must be supplemented with important vitamins and minerals. Many parrot breeders use pellets as a seed substitute to provide dietary completeness. But in many cases, the pellets are made using cheaper manufacturing processes and don't address the needs of parrots and other large companion birds. They're also less appetizing than seeds and soft food diets.

At the Hagen Avicultural Research Institute (HARI), years dedicated to finding a better, nutritionally complete



extruded bird diet have produced a breakthrough bird food called Tropicana. Tropicana is so nutritionally advanced that there is no need for dietary supplements. It is formulated for companion birds such as parrots, amazons, cockatoos, macaws, cockatiels, lovebirds, conures, rosellas and most other pet birds.

Only Tropicana contains eight grains and nuts, including corn, wheat, oats, soybeans, sunflower kernels, peanuts, rice and flaxseed. It also contains a special blend of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients, as well as natural fruit flavoring.

Tropicana contains human-grade sunflower kernel and peanut meal — not cheaper meals, which are by-products of the vegetable oil industry. The small bird formula contains egg protein for the higher metabolism of small birds.

This policy helps ensure a natural, stable and safe product.

Tropicana is produced using a unique process that includes cooking the extruded grains. This improves the granular texture and digestibility. Cooked granules don't break down into dust like ordinary pellets, so there's less waste. When moistened, Tropicana can

be spoon fed to weaning babies. Tropicana contains one-fifth the amount of fat found in oilseeds such as sunflower seeds and peanuts. Long-term research at HARI shows that birds on a Tropicana diet maintain healthy weight levels and grow better plumage (data available on request). Birds that eat ordinary pellets containing less fat may become thin and require oil seeds to keep the weight on.

Higher fat content means birds get more energy, while consuming less protein. The combination of higher fat metabolism and reduced protein results in decreased water intake and less urination (compared to ordinary pellets).



Tropicana is the only formulated food line that most birds will need in their whole lifetime, from a newly hatched baby chick to a mature, breeding adult. For baby chicks, Tropicana Breeding Diet is a formula product with no guesswork, recipes or cooking required. Tropicana High Performance Granules diets provide stressed or breeding birds with extra protein and minerals. For regular maintenance, Tropicana Lifetime Granules or Lifetime Food Sticks ensure that fussy eaters get a full balanced diet.

Premium Mixed Diets

Mixed diets provide nutritional interest and variety. Gourmet and Living World Premium Foods contain assorted exotic nuts, naturally grown fruits and vegetables, plus Tropicana Fruity Granules. TropiMix contains more than 50% fruits and nuts and is free of husks or shells, eliminating messy waste. It can be a good diet base when combined with the appropriate fresh foods.

Water and Bathing

Birds must have access to fresh water at all times. Place the water source away from areas where it can get contaminated by seeds or feces. Drinking Tubes can be attached outside cages, protecting water from contaminants.

Freshness is important. Change water daily whenever possible, even when using tubes which hold many days' supply.

Bird Baths are an essential component of basic bird care. All parrot-type birds, including budgies, prefer being sprayed with a fine warm water mist and bathing in open water baths. Canaries and finches need an open water bath, either on the cage floor or attached to the door.

They will drink from their bath so the water must be changed frequently whenever the bird has access to the bath.



Seed Treats

Some birds instinctively know that some trace minerals are found in naturally occurring grits. Since parrot-type birds remove the seed shells, they probably require little grit-based grinding action as their gizzard seems more than able to handle the job even without any grit. Pet doves, quail and pigeons require grit because they do not shell their seed.

Many pet birds do not get all the minerals they need, so it is recommended to periodically offer small amounts of a mineral grit substance such as Oystershell. This hard grit is an excellent source of calcium.

Seed treats add variety and interest to a regular diet. They should be alternated to provide different nutrients and textures. Birds on a Tropicana diet should be hand fed small amounts of seed treats.

Spray millet and honey sticks encourage birds to work for their food, promoting natural foraging behavior. Plus, as any bird owner can tell you, pet birds love these items!

Fresh Greens and Fruit

Birds can get natural vitamins from fresh greens and fruits. Celery, broccoli, spinach, romaine lettuce, endive, orange slices, fresh corn, carrot tops, clean dandelions, clover and chickweed are favorites among cockatiels, budgies, lovebirds, canaries and finches. Larger birds also enjoy these items along with other fresh foods such as apples, berries, pomegranates and grapes. These foods are all excellent vehicles for Prime vitamin and mineral supplement. Just sprinkle lightly before offering. Wash thoroughly before feeding.

Fresh greens and fruits don't cause diarrhea but can create polyuria (excess water excretion) due to high water content. This is not harmful to the bird, although they should be offered in moderation. Remove all uneaten fresh food, as these will quickly spoil and can become contaminated.



General Bird Care

Letting Your Bird Out of its Cage

If you're going to train your bird or let it exercise outside of its cage, close all doors, windows and other openings like fireplaces and vents. Close curtains or blinds to protect it from colliding with a window.

If you have an aquarium, make sure it's covered. Turn off or cover any fans. Do not allow birds in the kitchen while cooking is taking place. Supervise your bird's activities to ensure it doesn't gnaw on electrical wires, toxic substances or your favorite sofa! If you have plants, check with your vet to see that they are not poisonous. Keep your bird away from all other pets — especially cats. Ask your pet shop retailer or avian veterinarian to trim the flight feathers before first training sessions.

Nail Trimming

Nails should be trimmed regularly. Use an emery board or file for very tame birds every few weeks. Other birds may benefit from a proper clip with a safe instrument such as a special trimmer. Let a professional show you how to do this safely. Never start without styptic powder in case a nail is accidentally cut too short. Positioning a Pedi-Perch in your bird cage will encourage self-grooming of the nails and beak.

Bird Toys

Birds vary in size, strength and behavior. Select good quality, safe toys. Watch out for rings or openings that could trap a head, foot or toe. Gradually introduce new toys and change toys on a regular basis to create interest (many owners "rotate" a set of toys once weekly). Clean toys regularly. Discard toys that are broken or have become unsafe.

Choose toys that are "chewable" such as those with rawhide, rope or wooden parts, and "non-chewable" such as mirrors, plastic toys and bells. Keep nails trimmed on birds with access to rope toys (rope toys must be closely monitored - if toy becomes frayed, trim away frayed part or discard). Supervise your pet when it gets a new toy.

Health Care

Wash your hands before and after handling birds. Maintain a routine cleaning schedule. Keep all food and water





containers clean, wash daily if possible. Throw out any containers, toys or utensils that are cracked, badly scratched or chipped. Keep perches clean and replace regularly. Store bird seed in airtight containers in a cool, dark place. Be careful about exposing pet birds to other birds (i.e. during boarding or grooming) and use caution when introducing new birds. Talk to your veterinarian about a quarantine period.

Illnesses can't always be prevented. If you're very familiar with your bird's normal behavior, this will help you detect any deviation from the norm, which may signal an illness. Birds are well known for hiding their illnesses, and may continue to eat normally until close to death.

However, activity or respiration patterns will usually change, and droppings will almost always change. Generally, a bird is sick if it exhibits one or more of the following signs: sluggish and inactive behavior, fluffed up appearance, more rapid breathing, abnormal droppings, sneezing, vomiting (mirror induced or courtship

regurgitation is normal for budgies), abnormal posture or makes unusual sounds while breathing. A sick bird may continue to eat.

Don't hesitate to talk to your pet shop retailer or veterinarian if you see any kind of problem.

Keep the bird under high heat and humidity (85°F / 29°C) until it can be seen by an avian veterinarian. Change and save the cage liners and inspect the droppings carefully. Place food and water in several locations and on the cage floor. Most bird illnesses are true emergencies.

Try and contact your veterinarian as soon as possible. Have your bird weighed regularly to monitor its health. An avian emergency reference guide and first aid kit should be purchased at your local pet retailer

Bird Care: Basic Guidelines

- Pet bird care should be a shared family responsibility.
- Ask your pet retailer about the best species for your lifestyle.
- A bird cage should be spacious, secure, and cleaned frequently.
- Always have fresh food and water changed daily.
- Keep bird cages in a safe location, away from dangers such as direct sunlight, kitchen fumes, cold temperatures and predators.
- Secure your home from any potential dangers before letting your bird fly around freely; always monitor its flight.
- Never chain down a bird—clipping flight feathers is a safe and humane way to prevent pet birds from escape or injury.
- Know your pet bird—any change in normal behavior could be a sign of illness.
- If your bird's beak, wings, or nails require trimming, let a veterinarian or avian expert show you how to do it first.
- Most birds, especially very young ones, need attention; take the time to play with them.
- Plain seed mixes can lead to obesity as well as deficiencies in calcium and vitamins. Try to feed your bird formulated diets or at least provide nutritional seed supplements.
- Birds should visit the vet at least once a year.

Canada: 1-800-554-2436

U.S.A.: 1-800-724-2436

HAGEN web site: www.hagen.com

HARI web site: www.hagen.com/hari/

