

HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR NEW BIRD

Congratulations! Whether this is your first bird or your last addition, there are a few things you should know about the care of your bird.

DIET:

What do you feed a parrot? NOT JUST SEED AND WATER! We recommend that you feed your parrot a wide variety of foods. Birds have different nutritional needs, depending on the species, health, etc. The majority of companion parrots, however, should be on a diet consisting of 60% seeds and pelleted or extruded food, 30% fresh fruits and vegetables, and 10% healthy people food. The best set-up for your bird is to have 3 dishes: one for seed and pellets, one for water, and one for fruits and vegetables, treats, and table food.

You should give your birds fresh seed/pellet mix every day. Instead of filling the seed dish all the way to the brim, try to give your bird only as much as it will eat in one day. Never put wet food on top of seed or pellets because it can promote bacterial growth, which can cause health problems for your bird.

Fresh water should be given EVERY DAY. The water dish MUST be cleaned thoroughly with soap and hot water every day. Ronie's does not recommend the use of water tubes because they promote bacterial growth which can cause illness.

Check with your veterinarian to determine whether or not you need to supplement your bird's diet with vitamins. Powdered vitamin and mineral supplement such as Avia, Super Preen, Nekton S, or Prime, can be sprinkled on the seed or soft foods. Birds with a higher daily calcium requirement can be given D-Ca-Fos powder sprinkled on the fruits and vegetables. It is a calcium supplement that promotes healthy feather growth and discourages feather plucking.

A variety of fresh fruits and vegetables should be given to your bird every day. Thoroughly rinse off fresh fruits and vegetables and serve raw. Cooked or thawed frozen fruits or vegetables spoil much more quickly than fresh and should be removed after 2 hours. If you are serving dinner and wish to share cooked foods with your bird, be sure to pick up any leftovers within one hour. Even if your bird does not like different foods, there are now creative ways to introduce them, such as the stainless steel "fruit kabobs". You skewer the fruit on a bar and hang it right in front of your bird in its cage!

Cockatiels tend to favor vegetables over fruits, but that's all right because vegetables are generally more nutrient dense than fruits. Smaller birds will usually eat fruits or vegetables, if served with Petamine, a powdered seed supplement. Get your bird used to the Petamine in a small treat cup first and serve it fresh everyday, then a week or two later, start sneaking in pieces of fruits or vegetables that you have rolled in the Petamine, kind of like " Shake 'n' Bake"! Ronie's has had success in getting finicky Cockatiels to eat these items: broccoli slaw, broccoli heads (chopped up), sprouts, whole grain wheat bread, "Soak 'n Cook," and Cheerios. Our motto is: "the more variety, the better".

Below is a partial list of the fruits and vegetables you may serve your bird (serve at least 2 of each every day):

Apples, oranges, bananas, grapes, papaya, cantaloupe, mango, peaches, pears, apricots, honeydew, watermelon, pineapple, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, cranberries, kiwi, kumquats, nectarines, plums, corn on the cob, green beans, peas (in the pod), zucchini, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, bell pepper (red, yellow, green), tomato, sprouts (seeds, beans, legumes), dark green lettuce, kale, mustard greens, brussell sprouts, and chili peppers.

Below is a list of some cooked foods you can feed your bird. Make sure that you remove these after 2 hours:

Yams, sweet potatoes, brown rice, squash (all varieties), white or red potatoes, beans, legumes, frozen or fresh cooked vegetables, pasta, fish, chicken, and beef.

DO NOT FEED YOUR BIRD:

ALCOHOL, AVOCADO, CHOCOLATE, SALTY FOODS, GREASY FOODS, SUGARY FOODS, FRUIT PITS AND SEEDS, AND CAFFEINE.

Use common sense when feeding your bird; if it's not healthy for you, it's not good for your bird.

BATHING

Birds need water and humidity to keep their feathers looking good. Birds that do not get enough baths/showers are more likely to chew or pluck their feathers, so make it a habit to bathe (drench) your bird at least once a week and mist your bird as often as every day. Many people are afraid to bathe their birds because it is too cold or because the bird doesn't seem to like it. The bird will learn to enjoy the bath if it is shown just how much fun a bath can be. If it is cold outside, be sure to bathe the bird indoors in a warm room with no drafts. If the bird is healthy, bathing it during the winter months will not make it sick. If the bird has an underlying health problem, however, the stress of bathing can make the bird worse.

Here are three ways to bathe your bird:

1. Spritz your bird with a bird bath spray or a spray bottle of water (set the nozzle to mist). Cockatoos, Cockatiels, and African Grey Parrots have a powder-base to their feathers and should only be bathed with water.
2. Take your bird into the shower with you. First take your bird in the bathroom and let it sit on top of the shower curtain or place onto a shower perch to get him used to the noise in the room. When you think that your bird is calm enough to go under the water, just hold the bird at the edge of the spray for a few seconds. Work up to longer periods of time under the water. Most birds will like the shower and will drench themselves.
3. Fill the sink, basin, or bathtub with an inch or so of water (depending on how large the bird is) and let the bird splash around. The only problem with this method is that the bird usually doesn't get as clean.

If it is cool outside and you wish to dry your bird, first towel dry the bird, if possible. Then use the blow dryer on a cool or warm setting. Hold the blow dryer at least 12-15 inches away, and keep one hand in between the blow dryer and the bird so that you can monitor the temperature of the air.

LIGHTING

Birds, like humans, need full spectrum lighting for optimal health. They need to spend some time outside in the sunlight every week (in a carrier or cage) or they need to have full spectrum lighting placed above their cage (10-12 hours per day).

GROOMING

Grooming a bird is an important part of keeping your bird healthy and safe. It includes wing clipping, nail clipping, and sometimes beak trimming. When a bird's nails dig into your arm or it is flying around your house, it is time for a grooming. This will need to be done on the average of 2-3 times a year for most birds. Ronie's does not recommend that you groom your own bird. Parrots generally do not like to be groomed, so it is best to let someone else do the grooming and then you can rescue your bird afterwards. Some birds, like African Greys, are more clumsy than other birds and do better with balancing when their nails and wings are not trimmed on the same day.

A properly clipped bird should still be able to fly safely to the ground without making a crash landing. Even a properly clipped bird can gain lift (fly upward) if it is outside on a windy day or a gust of wind comes by. So don't feel secure while taking your clipped parrot outside, unless it is in a cage or carrier of some kind. Parrots who are caged, properly clipped, and kept indoors rarely, if ever, wind up in the lost and found column.

CAGES

Buy as large a cage as you can afford and have space for. Your bird should be able to flap its wings inside the cage without touching both sides of the cage. Birds do not fly straight up and down like some cages are designed; make sure the cage has adequate horizontal space for your bird to move around in. The bar spacing should be close enough so that your bird cannot stick his head through the bars.

It is also good to have more than one perch in the cage so that your bird can climb around and exercise when it is inside of the cage. The perch should be made of natural wood, not dowels or sand paper perches, so that your bird will not get pressure sores on its feet. Food bowls should be positioned so that the bird cannot sit and defecate into them.

TOYS

Be sure that your bird has lots of interesting toys! Be creative and give your bird a variety of textures and colored toys. Rotate your bird's toys weekly. Parrots are similar to a 2-3 year old child; they need a lot of mental stimulation. If your bird has a favorite toy, leave that one in its cage, otherwise change them frequently to avoid boredom.

Many birds are afraid of new toys (like African Greys)! If this happens to your bird, the best thing to do is to show the bird the new toy. Don't put it inside the cage, just set it down near the cage so that the bird can see it. Every time you have the chance, pick the toy up and show it to your bird. Tell your bird just how wonderful the toy is and just how fun it is to play with. After a few days, try hanging the toy on the outside of the cage, down low. Move the toy to the inside of the cage when you feel that your bird is no longer afraid of it.

Check your bird often to make sure that the toy (new or old) is safe around the bird. Toes or beaks can become entangled in chains or toy edges. Frayed toys can wrap around a bird's neck or toes. Even a toy that has been played with for some time and seems safe, can injure your bird, so be ever vigilant.

Some household items make excellent toys: paper towel rolls, pieces of clean cardboard, a clean sock tied into a knot, a clean toothbrush (for smaller birds), measuring cups and spoons, etc.

VETERINARY CARE FOR YOUR BIRD

Avian veterinarians specialize in birds. There are several avian veterinarians in the area. You must feel comfortable with your avian vet, as you would your own doctor. If not, try another vet until you find one that you like.

Responsible bird owners need to learn about bird health and how to maintain that health. Become familiar with the recommended tests and vaccines for birds. As with other pets, birds need annual physical exams.

IF YOU GO TO BIRD MART EXPOS, BE SURE THAT YOU SHOWER AND WASH YOUR CLOTHES IN SOAP AND HOT WATER (YOU CAN ADD A DISINFECTANT) AND SPRAY YOUR SHOES AND LEAVE THEM OUTSIDE - BEFORE YOU HANDLE ANY OF YOUR OWN BIRDS!! Bird marts are an easy place to pick up bacteria, viruses, and germs on your clothes, shoes, hair, and under your fingernails. **ANYTIME YOU HANDLE BIRDS OUTSIDE OF YOUR HOME (BIRD STORES), BE SURE TO DISINFECT YOURSELF WHEN YOU GET HOME.**