



Hand raised small parrots can make an excellent companion animal due to their affectionate and sociable behaviour, intelligence, beautiful colouring and ability to imitate sounds and human voices. They can form close and affectionate bonds with their owners when given regular attention and interaction with your household. Your parrot can be likened to a three year old child and will get easily bored if not given stimulation to keep them busy when alone, along with lots of time out of their cage to be with humans.

Most of the small parrots we sell can live up to 30 years, with cockatiels generally living between 10 and 15 years.

DIET - A small parrots diet in the wild consists of seeds, fruit, nectar, pollen, buds and sometimes insects.

To give your parrot the nutrients it will need to thrive, we suggest using a Vetafarm Pellet diet to include all the nutrients and vitamins they need.

If you have your parrot on a seed diet, you will need to include a multivitamin to ensure optimum health.

Lorikeets however are primarily nectar and pollen consumers, and have tongues with brush tips to collect this source of food, as well as some specialized gut adaptations to accommodate this diet. We sell Avione and Sheps dry and wet nectar formulas to give them all the nutrients they will require. Due to their different requirements some seeds are not good for your lorikeet, so we suggest researching their diet before introducing any new foods to them.

Fresh fruit/veggies at least 3 - 4 times per week, here are a few suggestions below:

FRUIT - apple, grape, guava, kiwi fruit, mango, melon, nectarine, orange, peach, pear, pomegranate, plum, strawberry, tangerine, watermelon

VEGETABLES - bok choy, broccoli, carrot (chopped or grated), celery, chard, peas, spinach, sweetcorn, watercress, zucchini.

IMPORTANT - Never feed your parrot alcohol, caffeine, chocolate and avocado. Also avoid eggplant, rhubarb, asparagus, cabbage, milk and cream, and raw potato are not recommended.

TREATS - can include pine-nuts, safflower and sunflower seeds. They can include their favorite fruit that aren't part of their usual diet (this increases how 'special' the treat seems to the bird). An excellent fresh food is cooked kumara (Sweet Potato) as it has a high amount of beta-carotene, which promotes color and feather vitality. It can be mashed or diced etc.

Chilies are also relished due to their 'finger food' size. Parrots cannot taste capsaicin (spicy part of chili) so it would be like sweet capsicum to them (no need to worry about burning the bird's tongue!). Grapes still on the bunch are also a fun and nourishing treat. Fresh eucalypt leaves with blossoms or buds attached are also great to strip apart! Always carefully wash any fresh produce. Special stainless steels spears can be purchased to hang fruit/vegetable shish-kebab style from the cage roof to minimize mess with fresh foods.

TRAINING AND TALKING - Most small parrots can mimic simple words and sounds that they hear repeatedly and whistle tunes with precision. If you want to teach your parrot to speak you should start with simple words such as "hello", then develop from there. Small parrots are renowned for other mimicry capabilities such as television, kettles, microwaves, telephones etc ... Good reactions to your voice should be rewarded with a pet and a treat, while make sure to ignore bad behaviour such as screaming, by returning them to the cage with no reaction. While it is sometimes noted that males are the better talkers, both genders have the ability to speak.

Teaching your bird to climb onto your finger is also important. Place your finger across the birds belly and move your finger forward. Say "step up", and as your finger moves forward this will make the bird climb onto your finger and in time the bird will know what to do without having to hear the command. Same applies when returning to the cage to "step up" onto the perch.

Care should be taken not to allow a 'pair bond' to form between owners and birds as this encourages inappropriate behavior during breeding season, usually due to frustration! Some signs of over protectiveness of a specific person (or object) are biting, jealousy, displaced aggression (Biting something other than the object of their aggression) and stress when the 'mate' individual is absent. Ensure everyone in the household engages in all aspects of the bird's care (cleaning, feeding and handling) to avoid over bonding with any particular individual.

EXERCISE - Arranging multiple perches and ladders to make levels is a very effective way of enriching the birds' playtime. Acrylic toys are essential as cheap plastics will only last a few hours. The strength of a small parrots beak is reasonable considering its modest size! Therefore several attractive wooden and acrylic toys are necessary to satisfy constant chewing urges and save furniture. Rotate and/or swap toys fortnightly to maintain interest levels. Another great accessory is a play-stand, which comes with a ladder and food cups. Toys can be added for their fun. Parrots love water, so consider a bird bath in their cage for the warmer months.

HOUSING - There is a huge variety of cages on the market. We will advise on the minimum size cage for your small parrot, however best to go with the biggest your budget can afford. Varieties include open top cages, allowing your bird time out of the cage, while being able to access food and toys when desired. Never leave your bird outside the cage unattended, however while you are home they will love the freedom to be outside their cage walls. If you don't have an open top cage, bird stands are a great way to give your bird time out of the cage to interact and can easily be moved from room to room.

ROUTINE MEDICATIONS/HEALTH - All parrots should be wormed on a regular basis (depending on product brand). Our preferred brand Vetafarm recommends using their product every 3 months to guard against intestinal worm infestations. Worming is particularly important in birds, especially smaller species. This is because they lack the weight reserves as in a cat or a dog, and once the worms begin to steal nutrients away from the gut the bird will start to show rapid weight loss almost straight away (remember parrots have a much higher metabolism than us). Consequently other problems will begin to arise in a snowball type effect due to stress. Signs of worms are: weight loss despite healthy food intake, watery and/or greenish droppings, and worms visible in stool samples. Action to control lice and mite infestations is also essential in maintaining any birds' health and vitality. These are roughly equivalent to fleas in cats or dogs, except most are invisible to the naked eye. Signs of infection include: constant itching/scratching, irregular feather loss, and abnormal feather re-growth. Our recommended product is Vetafarm Avian Insect Liquidator. This can safely be used directly on the bird itself, plus housing and accessories. Always remove any food or water source before spraying. This product also helps repel flies and spiders from the cage area.