

Caring for your **Bird**

Taking care of a bird is a big job! Find out what supplies you will need and what responsibilities you will have to take care of your new feathered friend.

Supplies

The Right Cage

Ask your veterinarian, different birds need different cages.

Here are some must-haves:

- Must be big enough for your bird to stretch his/her wings and fly
- Be made from nontoxic (nonpoisonous) material
- Must be hard enough that your bird can't ruin it by chewing
- Make sure the cage is in spot where it can't be knocked or fall over.
- Put the cage in an area like a family room, so your pet can be around everyone –birds are very social
- Avoid putting the cage near drafts and kitchens. Kitchen fumes like burnt Teflon from a cooking pan can kill a bird.

Bedding/Lining

- Use non-colored newspapers with soy ink, paper towels, or brown paper

Perches

- Get both fat and thin perches – like manzanita branches. This helps birds exercise their feet and prevents pressure sores.
- Never use sandpaper perches. They will hurt your pet's feet.
- Large birds like Amazons or African Greys need a freestanding perch outside the cage. For questions, consult your veterinarian.

Food Dishes

- Must be attached, so they can't be tipped over

Toys

- Birds like mirrors and other toys. Make sure all toys are made from nontoxic material.

Chores

Daily – Clean the cage of any droppings. Change water once or more if needed. Provide fresh fruits and vegetables, and remove food after a couple hours. If your bird is hand-tamed, take him/her out to play for at least an hour each day.

Weekly – Breakdown and clean cage with mild soap. Make sure you rinse off all the soap.

Monthly – Ask your veterinarian to recommend a disinfectant cleaner that you can use to clean the cage each month

Yearly – Birds, like all pets, should see their veterinarian each year



What to Feed Your Bird

Dos

- Birds need a balanced diet -- with food from all the major food groups
- Birds are one type of pet that benefits from eating many "people foods"
- Birds must have fresh fruit and vegetables daily

Don'ts

- Never feed your bird a "seed-only" diet
- Never feed your bird houseplants, avocado, cherry pits, rhubarb, apple seeds or raw milk products

Poisons and Dangerous Fumes

Many common household items can hurt or even kill your bird. These include:

- Overheated Teflon cookware
- Tobacco smoke
- Lead paints
- Scented candles or incense
- Chemical cleaners
- Insecticides
- Aerosol products
- Some houseplants

Trimming

- Have your veterinarian show you how to trim your bird's wings. If you do it wrong, you could clip a "blood feather" and hurt or even kill your bird.
- It's also important that you have your bird's nails and beak trimmed by a veterinarian.

Finding the Right Veterinarian

- When you get your pet, have your parents or guardian take it to a veterinarian for a check-up. Choose one that specializes in birds, called an avian veterinarian.
- Your pet should see a veterinarian at least once a year and when you think it might be sick

How to Tell if Your Bird is Sick

- Puffed up or ruffled feathers
- Droppings are different
- Cloudy eyes
- Reduced appetite
- Open-mouthed breathing
- Tail bobbing
- Sleeping excessively
- Frequent sneezing

Call your veterinarian immediately if your bird seems to be acting differently.

Information about taking care of your bird provided by Dan Jordan, DVM, Animal Avian Hospital of the Village, Houston, Texas.

