

Hilltop Pet & Aquariums

Bird Information Sheet

43 Main South Road, O'Halloran Hill. SA. 5158 Ph: (08) 8322 1888

Open Monday - Friday 9:30am-6pm Weekends & Public Holidays 10am - 5pm

Selecting a Pet

The key to selecting a pet bird is to look at how much room you have available to house the bird. If you only have a small area or small cage in mind, obviously you can not look at housing a larger bird.

The most common birds kept are small granivores (budgerigars, canaries, finches), medium granivores (love birds, cockatiels) and large granivores (galahs, cockatoos, other large parrots). Granivores are seed or grain eating birds. Some birds require a permit to keep them in captivity. If in doubt, contact National Parks & Wildlife.

Purchasing Birds in Hot Weather

Pursuant to the South Australian Code of Practice, birds should not be sold and removed from the premises in temperatures exceeding 31°C.

Transportation

Birds should be covered when they travel so they can not see where they are going. A shoe box or a secure cage covered on all sides is recommended.

Housing

Cage size requirements differ for each species of bird. Following are the minimum cage sizes for the permanent housing of birds as per the South Australian Code of Practice for the Husbandry of Captive Birds.

Birds should have an interesting environment e.g. bells, ladders, and toys. We have perches available varying in size and shape to exercise the bird's feet. Perches should not be placed over food and water containers as they may be fouled by their droppings. Tree branches are also recommended as perches, providing you are confident that no pesticides have come into contact with them or they are non-toxic. If you use natural branches, eucalyptus is preferred, it is recommended to spray the branch with a pyrethrum based mite and lice spray prior to adding it to the cage.

Recycled newspaper or wooden pellets should be used as a cage base as they help to reduce smell and dust. Shell grit should not be used as a base as they may eat droppings when they pick it up. It should be supplied in a separate container (see feeding section).

When purchasing a bird, you must first decide where to position the cage. Do not place the cage in a doorway where a person walking through could startle the bird.

Hang the cage at an appropriate level. Perch level should be eye level if possible. A low hanging cage (where you can look over it) can intimidate the bird and make it harder to train. Cages hung too high can also slow the training process. Common sense is one of the most important factors in relation to cage placement. For example, do not place a cage next to a window that receives hot sun during the day as the bird could over-heat and do not place the cage in a position accessible to the family pet or young children.

Birds can be prone to weather extremities, being too hot or too cold. On days over 30°C, they should be brought indoors into cooler conditions. Birds should be kept dry and covered from draughts in cooler weather conditions.

Never put your bird in the kitchen as some kitchen odours can harm birds, even to the point of death.

Always ensure the door to the cage is secure. Some birds, such as parrots, are clever enough to open them.

Cages should be cleaned weekly or more often if required. You should not use any household sprays to clean the cage or use them in the same room. There are bird cage cleaning sprays available for this purpose.

Cage covers should be used if your bird does not receive 10-12 hours of darkness per day. Seed covers around the bottom saves a lot of discarded seed from finishing up on the floor.

Warning: never use sand grit perches or sand paper flooring as these can damage the soft tissue on the bird's feet and can cause a condition called 'bumble-foot'. There are bird claw clippers and 'feet friendly' perches available that can help keep their claws trim without damaging their feet, e.g. 'Pedi-Perches'.

Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
30w x 25d x 40h	60w x 40d x 40h	60w x 60d x 60h	70w x 70d x 90h
Budgerigar Lovebird Canary Finch	Cockatiel Lorikeet Rosella	Galah Little Corella King Parrot Long Billed Corella	Sulphur-Crested Major Mitchell Electus

*Note: If two birds are to be housed in a cage, then the next cage size is required, e.g. two cockatiels will require a Category 3 Cage. Category One is excepted where two birds can be kept in the same cage.

Feeding

Feeding is dependant on the species of bird that is to be kept. Finch's and Canaries require a Finch and Canary Seed Mix. Budgerigars require a Budgie Seed Mix. Small parrots, e.g. Cockatiels, require a Small Parrot Seed Mix and Large Parrots will require a Large Parrot Seed Mix.

Shell Grit is a required to aid digestion. The shell grit works in the gizzard like ball bearings, helping to break down food. Ideally place another seed container in the cage with crushed shell grit. Cuttlefish should be used to aid in keeping their beak trim.

Fresh greens and grass (free of any herbicides and pesticides) should be offered weekly as part of their diet to simulate what they would eat in the wild.

Birds should be given treats like millet sprays, fruit sticks, honey sticks, fruits (no citrus), vegetables and thistles. If fruits and vegetables are given, ensure they are washed and the seeds are taken out first.

Birds should be given fresh seed and water EVERY day. When adding fresh water, try not to put your fingers in the water as birds are very sensitive to bacteria (especially when stressed).

Handling & Restraint

To restrain a budgie, place your hand over the bird and secure its cheek bones using your thumb and fore finger with gentle pressure. Use your little finger to hold down the legs. It is very important that you do not put any pressure on the bird's chest, which is full of air sacs and can lead to the suffocation of the bird. Be aware that all birds can bite. Restraint differs for small birds to large parrots. If you are not confident in handling your bird, for the safety of the bird it is recommended to avoid handling where possible.

Bird harnesses are available for all sizes of parrots (including budgies) to allow your birds more freedom without the danger of them escaping or injuring themselves.

Always make sure all doors, windows and curtains are closed and that ceiling fans are turned off before you even attempt to remove your bird from its cage. Once the cage door is open, they can be quick to escape and can fly into windows and cause serious injury to themselves, as they generally do not see the glass.

Health

Worming is very important for birds. Birds that are kept outside or put out temporarily can come into contact with wild birds which can give them worms. All birds should be wormed every 3 months, including indoor birds.

If the bird shows any illness such as fluffed up feathers for an extended period of time with the bird wanting to sleep during the day, audible breathing sounds, tail bobbing up and down when breathing, you should seek advice. Mites and lice can also be a problem, especially with birds that have contact with wild birds. There are sprays and powders available to treat this.

As mentioned in the 'Housing' section, do not cover the floor or perches with sand paper as this can lead to 'bumble-foot'.

Veterinary Care

You must be prepared to take any sick or injured animal to a vet without delay to minimize any pain or further complications to the health of your pet. Something that may begin as a minor problem can easily end up developing into something major, and possibly life threatening, so it is advisable to contact your vet without delay.

This brochure was put together by the staff of Hilltop Pet & Aquariums as a general guide to assist you in raising your pet and advising requirements to keep your friend happy and healthy.

If you cannot provide the proper care and housing, we strongly suggest you not purchase the animal.

We have books available for sale should you require more in