

Cockatiel

Cockatiels are bred in a variety of colors. Some of the color strains are gray, lutino, cinnamon, albino, white-faced and pearl. In sexing, female cockatiels have horizontal barring on the tails but this barring is absent in male cockatiels.

- **Common Name:** Cockatiel
- **Scientific Name:** *Nymphicus hollandicus*
- **Distribution:** Australia
- **Size:** 3.2 oz
- **Life Span:** 15 to 20 years.

Habitat

The best cage for a cockatiel is made of metal wire and should be a minimum of 16 inches wide by 24 inches long. The cage should be placed near a window but make sure the bird is able to retreat to the shade. Do not place the cage near a heater as hot air dries out a bird's mucous membranes. Perches should be thick enough so that a cockatiel's toes can't reach all the way around. Water containers should be cleaned daily to avoid any build up of bacteria. A bath should be provided early in the day. The bath can be provided by misting warm water on the bird or by using a commercial bathhouse made for cockatiels. Never give your bird a bath too close to nighttime because the bird could become chilled. Toys should be made of metal, acrylic or hard wood for the cockatiel to play with and chew on.

Temperature

Your pet cockatiel's environment should stay between 65 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit, and her cage must be free from drafts. A captive cockatiel can stand a wide range of temperatures, as long as the changes are gradual. A sudden drop in temperatures, though, is dangerous for her.

Lighting

Wild birds get their vitamin D primarily through a biochemical reaction with sunlight. When the bird preens, it puts oil from the uropygial gland on its feathers. This oil contains a vitamin D precursor which is converted to a weak form of vitamin D3 by ultraviolet (UV) light from the sun. The bird ingests the precursor (cholecalciferol) during preening and it is converted to true vitamin D3 (1,25-dihydroxycholecalciferol) in the body.

When sunlight passes through window glass and window screens they filter out most of the ultraviolet, so sunshine that passes through a window will not help our birds produce the vitamin D they need. Direct unfiltered sunlight is required.

It's hard to find information on how much sunlight a bird needs for vitamin D production, but the recommendations seem to range from 30 minutes a week to 30 minutes a day.

Use sensible precautions when giving your bird sunlight. Avoid temperatures that are too hot or too cold, and always provide a shady spot that your bird can retreat to if it's uncomfortable. Guard against hazards like escapes, predators, and exposure to germs and dangerous objects.

It's difficult for many pet owners to give their birds enough exposure to natural sunlight to meet their vitamin D3 needs. But fortunately there are other ways to provide it.

Nutrition

Cockatiels should be fed a good cockatiel seed mixture and/or pellets on a daily basis. Fruits, vegetables and greens will provide

variety in their diets and should also be provided on a daily basis.

Fruits may include apples, honeydew melon, grapes and watermelon. Vegetables may include broccoli, cucumbers, grated carrots and zucchini. Greens may include spinach, endive and parsley. You can add bread, whole grain breakfast cereals or cooked pasta as an addition to their diet. Do not feed cabbage, potatoes, avocados or citrus fruits. Keep in mind that tastes vary among birds. Vitamin supplements can also be added to their drinking water. Cuttlebone or mineral stones should be given to add minerals to their diets. Spray millet is an excellent daily addition to their diet. Grit should be available in a separate dish at all times.

Handling

Allow the cockatiel at least two weeks to adapt to its new environment. You may then offer treats but if the cockatiel gets nervous, you should withdraw your hand. Talk to the bird so that it gets used to your tone of voice. Continue to offer treats until it perches on your hand.

Talking

Many cockatiels excel at whistling notes or tunes. Whistling the same tune over and over is the best way to teach the melody to the bird. The ability to talk is not as impressive in cockatiels as in other birds. Repeat the words you would like the bird to say as often as possible. Always use the same words and tone of voice until it learns them and then move on to the next words.

This is only a basic care sheet,

Please continue to educate yourself on your new family member.