

# PARAKEET

Parakeets are an extremely popular pet bird, and for good reason. These small parrots make delightful pets, and are usually friendly and easy to tame. While they can sometimes be difficult to understand, they are quite capable of mimicking speech.

- **Common Name:** Budgie
- **Scientific Name:** *Melopsittacus undulatus*
- **Distribution:** Australia
- **Size:** About 6 – 7 inches.
- **Life Span:** Approximately 10 – 15 years.

## Habitat

- For one parakeet the minimum size cage you should get is 20 inches long, 18 inches deep and 18 inches wide. A pair of parakeets need a cage 30 inches long, and the same depth and height, while a cage for six parakeets should measure at least 40 inches long, 18 inches deep and 32 inches high
- Line the cage with paper towels or copy paper (better choices than newspaper) and change them regularly. Also be sure to clean all perches and toys.
- Set up the cage with perches, water/food dishes and toys. Bring the bird home to quiet place and play soft music for a few days.
- Provide several perches and/or swings of different diameters.
- Provide plenty of toys and be sure to change them often to keep your bird(s) stimulated so they do not get bored with the same old toys.

## Temperature

- Parakeets do best with moderate temperatures and become uncomfortable in extremes of hot or cold, just like their owners do. Ideal daytime temperatures for these birds range from 60 to 70

degrees Fahrenheit, although budgies can withstand heat of up to 85 degrees without getting uncomfortable.

### Lighting

- Like people, parakeets get their vitamin D from exposure to sunlight. And, like people, parakeets need vitamin D in order to process calcium, which is vital to nerve, brain and muscle function and for laying healthy eggs, and phosphorous, which is critical to bone formation, acid-base balance, metabolizing fat, protein and carbohydrates, and egg formation. Lack of vitamin D can also lead to depression in parakeets kept in low light, even to the point of self-plucking.
- Direct Sunlight- The question is not whether parakeets benefit from direct sunlight, it's about how much direct sunlight you expose them to. Generally, five minutes per day is enough, though factors such as season, hour of day, temperature and the location of the bird's cage must be considered. Some areas are too hot in the summer to place a parakeet in direct sunlight at high noon, for example. Outdoor light is best, as windows block ultraviolet rays. Do not leave your bird unsupervised when he's in direct sunlight.
- Heat Stroke - Sunlight might be necessary for parakeets, but they can overheat rapidly. Most birds suffer heatstroke in hot cars, often when being taken to the vet's. If your parakeet pants and holds his wings out from his body, heat stroke is setting in. He may also become agitated or sport a vapid facial expression. Immediately, but gently, soak him in room-temperature water -- cold water shock could be dangerous -- and remove him from the heat and light. Untreated, heat stroke could lead to convulsions, fever and death.
- Artificial Light - For Nordic parakeet parents living where sunlight is low, artificial lamps can provide a full spectrum of light to help keep your parakeet healthy. Full-spectrum bulbs can also help a housebound parakeet who does not get exposure to ultraviolet

light by sitting next to glass windows. Keep the lamp in the room, but not too near your parakeet. And make sure he can't get to the lamp's cord. Birds love to chew on electrical wires.

### **Nutrition**

- Change the food and water daily. Let the bird get used to you and the surroundings, doing nothing but maintaining his food/water and cage, before trying to train the bird to perch on your finger.
- Feed fresh vegetables such as kale, beets, peas, carrots, parsley, cooked yams, sliced apple, mandarin oranges, citrus, and the like. Parakeets should eat vegetables, fruit and sprouts — not just seed or processed pellets. Food can be clipped to the bars of the cage or chopped small in a food processor and put in a bowl.
- Millet sprigs or "sprays" are a favorite treat, but don't feed too much of it (about 1/2" per day), as it is fattening like junk food. Avoid sweets or excess oats, both of which are fattening.
- Most parakeet owners feed their pets a seed mixture as a basic diet. A good seed mixture will include a few different kinds of seeds along with other components, such as vitamin pellets, dried fruits or greens. However, even the best seed mixture doesn't have everything your bird needs, so keep in mind that seeds are just a core component of a more varied diet. A small dish of seed mixture should be available at all times so your bird can nibble all day. Because parakeets only eat from the top layer, you'll have to remove the seed cup each day, clear out the empty seed hulls and refill the cup with fresh seeds. It's also a good idea to clean the food dish completely every few days or whenever your bird makes a mess of the bowl.

This is only a basic care sheet,

Please continue to educate yourself on your new family member.

