

Housing

Canaries can be housed indoors in a large wire cage with a plastic base or outdoors in a purpose-built aviary. The cage should have some horizontal bars set at different heights as they love to hop from one perch to another this makes many round cages unsuitable. Bars should be no wider than 12mm apart to prevent escape. Kept outdoors, your aviary should allow room for the birds to fly around properly. Canaries kept indoors should be let out of their cage daily to exercise once they are familiar with the room make sure you keep all doors and windows closed when you do this. Covering the cage with a cloth at night will encourage your birds to settle down for sleep.

The cage should be located away from draughts and direct sunlight. Sand sheets or bird sand must be placed in the bottom of the cage – Canaries need this to help digest their food.

Types of Canary

Canaries come in assorted breeds, colours and markings. Common breeds are Gloster Coroner, Yorkshire, Fife, and crested. Typical markings include buff, clear yellow, white, and brown variegated.



Feeding

Canaries in the wild eat a wide range of seeds, grains, and vegetation. A specially-formulated Canary mix makes a good basic diet although supplements may also be required. Small pieces of fresh fruit and vegetables may also be given as treats and fresh drinking water should always be available. Certain foods can be harmful to your birds - avoid giving them lettuce, avocado, lemon, potato, or any sweets or drinks designed for human consumption. Cuttlefish can be given to provide extra calcium and grit should be available to aid digestion. An egg food can also be given occasionally. This helps canaries maintain their colour and is especially good for breeding and pregnant birds.

Looking after your Canaries

Exercise & Entertainment:

Canaries naturally enjoy playing so provide them with plenty of toys to keep them mentally and physically stimulated. Canaries cannot talk, but cock birds will sing quite loudly and repetitively during the mating season ! Hen birds will 'cheep' rather than sing.

You should provide a bath for your Canaries, either fixed to the outside of the cage or a shallow bowl placed inside the cage although some birds may prefer to be sprayed with tepid water instead.

Handling:

Although friendly, Canaries will rarely become tame enough to perch on your finger unless hand-reared. They will usually respond when you talk to them although unlike budgies, they will not mimic your voice. To pick up a Canary, ensure your palm covers its back and wings while your middle and index finger surround the bird's neck. Use your other fingers to support its body and feet. Be gentle – Canaries will bite if they feel stressed or threatened. If catching an aviary bird use a padded rim net and never try to catch it in mid flight - always wait until it is perched safely.

Breeding:

Canaries can be mated from about 9 months old and will produce a clutch of 4-6 eggs in about 14 days. As with all pets, breeding Canaries requires much commitment of time and effort. It is recommended that you therefore seek expert advice and do appropriate research before considering keeping a breeding pair and only if you're certain you can find good homes for the babies.

Tips for a happy healthy Canary

Community:

Canaries prefer the company of their own kind and should not be kept alone. They can be kept in pairs (hens with cocks) although if just keeping a few birds together, either sex should be fine. For larger aviaries it's usually best to keep more hens than cocks – otherwise the cock birds may fight over the hens. You can also mix pairs of Canaries with other soft-billed small birds such as Finches although if kept in a breeding aviary you shouldn't mix more than 2 species.

Health:

Excessive moulting can indicate stress – seek advice from your vet. As with all birds, if you are worried about any aspect of your Canary's health, seek advice from an Avian veterinarian. For a healthy life, your Canary needs the following:

- A good balanced diet with no sudden changes
- Plenty of toys to keep them amused
- Water bottle and feed bowls cleaned daily
- Use peaches that file nails avoiding clipping by a vet or experienced person which is stressful for your bird
- A daily bath – essential for their preening activities
- Regular exercise outside their cage