

 Notes:

Keeping Lovebirds As Pets



Lovebirds:

Friendly, inquisitive, colourful, and intelligent birds that are easy to keep and look after. The second smallest parrot species, they originate from Africa and its surrounding islands and they can live up to 20 years - so choosing them as a pet is a long-term commitment. Lovebirds like the company of their own species so are best kept in pairs or larger groups. If kept indoors they will need regular daily exercise outside their cage and are at their most active during the daytime, sleeping once it gets dark.

Duty of Care:

Every owner has a duty of care towards their animal. People should not take on the responsibility of keeping a pet unless they have the means to provide it with appropriate care and attention. This includes providing specialist treatment in the case of sickness or injury to prevent unnecessary suffering. Owners should arrange for their animal to be taken to a vet as soon as it becomes ill and be prepared to pay for any treatment themselves.

Housing

Lovebirds 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 on it to allow climbing – Lovebirds enjoy hopping from perch to perch. This means most round cages are 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. Lovebirds kept indoors will need to be let out of their cage daily to exercise under supervision – make sure you keep all doors and windows closed when you do this. Covering the cage with a cloth at night will encourage your Lovebird to settle down for sleep. Keeping masked and peach-faced birds together is not recommended as they can fight.

You should provide a bath for your bird, 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.

Types of Lovebird

Lovebirds come in a variety of colours and markings. They are usually green or yellow with orange, pink, and blue highlights in either peach-faced or masked varieties.

Feeding

Lovebirds in the wild eat a wide range of seeds, grains, and vegetation. A quality Cockatiel / Parakeet food mix makes a good basic diet although supplements may also be required such as cuttlefish which acts as a vitamin supplement, environmental enrichment, and also helps grind the beak down. Small pieces of fresh fruit and vegetables can also be given as treats and fresh drinking water should always be available. Certain foods can be harmful to your Lovebird - avoid giving them lettuce, avocado, lemon, potato, or any sweets or drinks designed for human consumption.

Looking after your Lovebirds

Exercise & Entertainment:

Lovebirds are curious and highly active birds that enjoy playing and climbing, so toys are essential to stimulate them mentally and physically. Lovebirds may be smaller than cockatiels yet they're much louder – they can emit a truly ear-piercing shriek when they want your attention.

Handling:

Lovebirds can be quite difficult to tame. Purchasing a pair of hand-reared birds under 4 months old is recommended. Lovebirds are quite territorial so you will need patience and perseverance to tame them successfully. Let them settle in their new environment, talk to them gently, and gradually get them used to accepting small treats through the



cage bars before moving on to stick training methods. Start by gently stroking the birds with a small stick a couple of times a day, then encourage them to jump onto the stick. Next, repeat the whole process through the door of the cage rather than the bars. Finally, repeat again, using your hands this time instead of the stick. This is a gradual process and may take several months of patient work.

To pick up your Lovebird, ensure your palm covers its back and wings while your middle and index finger surround the bird's neck. Be gentle – Lovebirds will bite if they feel stressed. 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:

Lovebirds can be mated from about a year old and will produce a clutch of 4-6 eggs in about 23 days. As with all pets, breeding Lovebirds 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 Lovebird

Community:

Lovebirds are not solitary birds by nature, so will always prefer the company of their own kind. 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 Lovebirds with other small parakeets such as budgerigars although if kept in a breeding aviary you shouldn't mix more than 2 species.

Health:

Lovebirds can get mites and lice in their feathers, usually treatable by sprays. Excessive moulting can be caused by temperature fluctuations or stress. As with all birds, if you are worried about any aspect of your Lovebird's health, seek advice from an Avian veterinarian. For a healthy life, your Lovebird needs the following:

- A good balanced diet
- Plenty of toys to keep them amused
- Water bottle and feed bowls cleaned daily
- Their nails clipped several times a year – ask your vet for advice
- A daily bath – essential for their preening activities
- Regular exercise outside their cage