



## Housing

Zebra Finches can be housed indoors in a large wire cage with a plastic base or outdoors in a purpose-built aviary. The cage should include 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. Zebra Finches 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.

## Types of Zebra Finch

Zebra Finches come in assorted colours and markings. Common colours include fawn, grey, and white. Typical markings include black breasted, penguin, yellow beak, and crested.

## Feeding

Zebra Finches in the wild eat a wide range of seeds, grains, and vegetation. A specially-formulated Finch 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.

## Looking after your Zebra Finches

### Exercise & Entertainment:

Zebra Finches naturally enjoy playing so it's a good idea to provide them with plenty of toys to keep them mentally and physically stimulated. They like to climb and should also be let out of their cage at least once a day for exercise.

You should provide a bath for your Zebra Finches, 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, Zebra Finches 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 Zebra Finch, 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 – Zebra Finches 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:

Zebra Finches can be mated from about 6 months old and will produce a clutch of 4-6 eggs in about 12 days. As with all pets, breeding Zebra Finches 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 Zebra Finch

### Community:

Zebra Finches can be kept alone but 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 Zebra Finches with other soft-billed small birds such as canaries although if kept in a breeding aviary you shouldn't mix more than 2 species.

### Health:

As with all birds, if you are worried about any aspect of your Zebra Finch's health, seek advice from an Avian veterinarian. For a healthy life, your Zebra Finch 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