

Caring for your Gouldian finch

**How to keep pet Gouldian
finches healthy and happy**



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Are Gouldian finches right for me?

Gouldian finches have gorgeous rainbow coloured plumage and make stunning pet birds to keep. They are lively and chirpy and are happiest living in groups.

Although social with other birds, they are best suited to being watched rather than handled as this can cause them stress. If well looked after they can live up to 7 years.

Originally from Australia, these birds are also known as Lady Gouldian finches, named after the wife of explorer John Gould.

In general, Gouldian finches are more challenging to look after compared to Zebra or Bengalese finches. As they are quite nervous birds, we advise against keeping them as a first pet bird. They are more suited to experienced owners. Once in their cage, they shouldn't really be moved unless it is necessary.

Choosing a new pet Gouldian finch

When selecting your finch, check these signs that he is healthy:

- Bright and alert
- Clear eyes and nostrils
- Clean vent
- Feathers flush to the body
- Steady breathing
- Active, free movement
- Firm beak with no cracks
- Healthy claws and feet

The first few days

Your new bird's cage should be set up before you bring him home.

When you get home, carefully place your finch in the cage and then leave him alone to adjust to his new surroundings.

Speak to him gently so that he becomes accustomed to your voice and feeding times. You will need to replace his food and water and clean the cage liner during this introductory time but do so slowly and calmly.

Finches joining an established group of birds should be added in pairs. Your new birds will need a period of quarantine in a separate but nearby cage. This gives time for the birds to get used to each other. After a week, bring the cage closer and monitor the birds' behaviour.

When introducing your new bird for the first time in its permanent home, put food stations at both sides of the cage so that the birds can feed separately.

There may be some bickering and flapping at first but this is normal. If the birds fight each other you may need to keep them apart for longer and try re-introducing them in a week or so.

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Creating a happy home

Gouldian finches are best suited to an indoor life, although in warm summer weather their cage can go outside.

Your bird's cage should be as large as possible to allow maximum space for free flight.

When choosing where your cage should go, a draught-free position where there is a constant temperature is ideal. Avoid window sills as they can become very hot in the afternoon and cold at night. Kitchens are generally unsuitable because they can become hot or smoky.

In the evening, cover the cage with a thin sheet/towel as this will make your bird feel safe at night and protect him from draughts.

Perches should have slightly different diameters (5-10mm) to exercise your bird's feet. Place them close to food and water with another one higher up for roosting. A bird bath should also be provided.

A healthy diet and treats

Finches need plenty of fresh water and it should be changed daily - twice a day in hot weather.

A healthy, varied diet would be:

- Foreign finch seed mix will form the basis of their diet. Grit must also be available to help proper digestion of the seed.
- Finches enjoy fresh fruit and vegetables such as apple and carrot along with

meadow grass. Always remove any fresh items from the cage after a few hours to prevent the cage becoming soiled. Never feed avocado or chocolate as these are poisonous to birds.

- A piece of cuttlefish bone will provide vital calcium and keep their beak well-trimmed.
- A mineral block will also supply necessary minerals.
- Egg food can be used to supplement diets at all times

Treat them now and then with millet sprays.

Getting to know you

If you need to pick up your finch, remove the perches to allow more room to catch him. Gently enclose him in your hand with his head between your first and second finger.

Exercise your Gouldian finch needs

Your finch gets all the exercise he needs from flying which is why it is essential that his cage is big enough to allow freedom to fly.

Gouldian finches and other pets

Gouldian finches are sociable little birds, which are happiest kept in pairs or in small groups.



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Gouldian finch gender

Female Gouldian finches tend to be lighter overall in colour than males.

When male birds are in breeding condition, their beaks turn reddish on the tip whereas the female beaks become a darker colour overall.

Please ask a member of our team whether they can confirm the sex of your finch before buying.

Potential health issues with Gouldian finches

Salmonellosis

This is more common in birds kept in an aviary where there could be exposure to rodents. This disease thrives in a dirty environment so cleaning and disinfecting their cage or aviary is essential. An affected bird will have greenish blood-stained diarrhoea and if discovered, your finch should be taken to a vet straight away.

Losing weight

Rapid weight loss can often lead to death and unfortunately, Gouldian finches are particularly susceptible to this health problem. It is also relatively common in recently fledged birds.

Always keep plenty of easily digestible food available for your birds. Seek veterinary advice if your bird doesn't show signs of putting weight back on.

Egg binding

Occasionally eggs can become stuck in the egg tract and you may see the hen straining as she tries to lay the egg, your finch should be taken to a vet straight away.

Mites

Birds with feather mites will appear restless, more so at night when the mites are most active. They can also suffer from anemia due to the blood loss.

Treat the bird, cage and any nest boxes with a suitable mite spray but if the problem persists, seek veterinary advice.

Your new pet checklist

- ☐ Cage
- ☐ Sand sheets
- ☐ Bird bath
- ☐ Finch seed
- ☐ Grit
- ☐ Cuttlefish bone
- ☐ Cage wipes and disinfectant
- ☐ Millet sprays
- ☐ Vitamins
- ☐ Mineral block



Help and further advice

If you have any questions about caring for your pet, our fully trained team are happy to help if they can, or advise on where to find more specialist information.

Whilst there is a wealth of information available online, only a professional will be able to correctly answer your query. If in doubt, call your local vet for an appointment.

It is against the law to release, or allow to escape, non-native animals or birds. If you have trouble caring for any animals contact our team for advice.



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