

# Caring for your lovebird

**How to keep pet lovebirds  
healthy and happy**



**Notcutts**  
GARDEN INSPIRATION SINCE 1897

# Caring for your lovebird



## Are lovebirds right for me?

Lovebirds are colourful, intelligent and affectionate birds. They make a great pet for beginners as they are quite hardy birds that are relatively easily tamed. Lovebirds are best kept in pairs or groups because they need a lot of attention.

Your lovebirds will form a close bond with you if well looked after and regularly handled. It is best to get them young to have the best chance at taming them.

Originally from Africa, these curious and playful little birds can live up to 20 years. Due to their long lifetime, deciding to keep lovebirds requires careful consideration.

Your commitment and daily interaction is needed to keep lovebirds socialised. They also need regular exercise out of their cage, preferable during the day when they are most active.

## Choosing a new pet lovebird

When selecting your lovebird, 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 birds cage should be set up before you bring them home.

When you get them home, carefully place them in the cage and then leave them alone to adjust to their new surroundings.

When placed in their new cage, your lovebirds will start to explore, firstly to locate food and water. If they are struggling, put a little seed on the floor of the cage to help them find the seed cups.

Millet sprays are good to have in their cage from the beginning, as this will settle them down while they get used to their new environment.

Your new lovebirds need a couple of days in their cage before you attempt to handle them. Only attempt to handle one bird at a time.

## Creating a happy home

Although lovebirds spend much of their time perching close together and preening one another, quarrels can break out and for this reason their cage should be as large as possible. The bars on their cage should be horizontal rather than vertical to allow your lovebirds to climb.

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.

# Caring for your lovebird

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

Perches should have slightly different diameters (15 - 20mm) to exercise your bird's feet. Place them close to food and water with another one higher up for roosting.

Lovebirds need to preen to keep their feathers in good condition. They need a bird bath in their cage for a few hours when the room is warm, preferably early in the day when they have had time to dry before night time. Alternatively, lightly spray them with a houseplant atomiser.

## A healthy diet and treats

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

A healthy, varied diet would be:

- Mixed seed forms the basis of their diet. Grit must also be available to help proper digestion of the seed.
- Lovebirds enjoy fresh produce such as apple, orange, grapes and soaked raisins and also garden weeds such as chickweed, groundsel and dandelion. Sprouted seeds are particularly good for lovebirds. 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.

Treat them now and then with millet sprays.

## Getting to know you

Regular handling and training is needed to maintain a tame lovebird.

Perch training is a good place to start. Try approaching the cage calmly with a spare perch held at one end. Slowly open the cage door and offer the perch level with your bird's chest so that he is encouraged to step up on it. Use a simple command at this point such as 'step up' and if he does it, reward him with a treat.

However, if he doesn't step onto the perch, try again later in the day, and then the next day if he's reluctant. Each training session should last no more than 20 minutes but can be repeated after an hour or so.

## Exercise your lovebird needs

Lovebirds like to play to stop them getting too bored. Keep toys to a minimum (one or two) to allow your lovebird maximum room to move around in his cage. Move the toys around occasionally or swap them out to keep his interest.

It is important that your lovebirds come out of their cage regularly. Ensure there are no fires or potential hazards and that any poisonous plants are removed. Dogs or cats should not be present while your bird is loose.



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## Lovebirds and other pets

Lovebirds are sociable birds and are best kept in pairs of mixed or single sex. Some of the masked varieties are far more timid than the more common peach-faced lovebird. We advise against keeping different species together.

## Lovebird gender

There is no obvious way to differentiate between the sexes of lovebirds. The only reliable way to identify their sex is through surgical sexing or chromosome testing, either of which can be done by a vet.

## Potential health issues with lovebirds

### Losing weight

Rapid weight loss is a serious concern and can often lead to death. 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.

### Overgrown nails and beaks

This is fairly common in older lovebirds. Clipping is a simple job for your vet so book him an appointment as soon as you can. You can prevent this by making sure there is always cuttlefish bone in their cage.

### 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 lovebird 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 and cover
- Sand sheets
- Bird bath
- Grit
- Cuttlefish bone
- Cage wipes and disinfectant
- Parakeet or cockatiel seed
- Toys
- Vitamins
- Millet sprays
- 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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