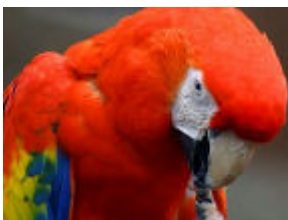
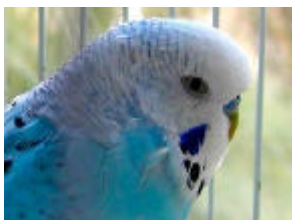


*Bird Health Notes:*



# **CHOOSING A BUDGERIGAR**

## General information

The budgerigar (*Melopsittacus undulates*), sometimes referred to as a parakeet or more commonly a budgie, is the most popular pet bird worldwide. This beautiful, small bird originates from the drier regions of Australia. Escaped budgies are currently establishing themselves as an introduced population in Florida, USA. Their natural habitat is dry open plains, woods bordering waterways and sparsely wooded grasslands.

Budgies are generally very social, gentle and affectionate in nature. These loving companions interact well with most members of the family. Budgies are inquisitive, active, free spirits who enjoy flying, playing and chewing. Non-toxic pet-safe toys should be provided for your budgie's entertainment. Although their voice is not as clear as some of the larger parrots, budgies have the capacity to develop extensive vocabularies. Talking or mimicking requires some effort and training. Males seem to talk better than females although both are capable. One endearing trait of a budgie is its cheerful whistling and chatter. Budgies can be finger trained and some even enjoy head scratches and petting.

## Purchasing a Budgerigar

Budgies may be purchased from a pet shop or, better, a reputable breeder. When selecting a Budgie, try to choose a young bird as it may be easier to tame and train. Older, wild, colony or parent raised birds may prove difficult to tame. Hand raised babies often make better pets since they have been completely socialised with humans. Young birds are easier to tame and adapt readily to new environments and situations. Your new bird should be exposed early to different events (young and old people, males and females,

other pets, car trips, visits to the vet, etc.) to help promote a calm, well adjusted pet. The lively, alert bird that is not easily frightened is more likely a healthy bird. After purchasing your new bird, have it examined by your veterinary surgeon.

## **Veterinary care**

Budgies require regular, routine veterinary health check-ups. Your vet can perform a physical examination, grooming (beak, nail or feather trim) and laboratory tests as needed. During these semi-annual check-ups, health, nutritional and maintenance issues can be identified and addressed. Veterinary check-ups help prevent disease and will aid in the maintenance of a long lasting, healthy relationship between you and your bird.

## **Colour**

### Mature

- the wild bird is basically green with yellow on the face. Black and yellow barring is found on the wings and head, black spots across the throat
- domestic varieties show infinite combinations and shades of green, yellow, blue, mauve, slate and white
- eye (iris) is white
- legs grey/blue with a reptilian pattern

### Immature

- duller colour, black barring on forehead, throat spots may be absent
- iris dark grey

# Sexing

## Mature

- feathering between sexes is similar
- the male's cere (featherless area around the nostrils) is rich blue in colour
- the female's cere is pale blue, pinky blue or brown and sometimes crusty in the breeding female
- cere colour may not identify the sexes 100% and may vary with domestic colour variations

## Immature

- difficult to sex

**Weight:** average 1.0 - 1.2 ounces (30 - 35 g), large varieties 1.2 - 1.6 ounces (35 - 45 g)

**Size:** average 7 - 7.5" (18 - 19 cm) in length

**Life span:** 6 - 10 years (maximum 18 years)

**Diet:** consult your vet (*or see the diet sheet in this series*)

**Breeding:** sexual maturity 6 months old.

Gregarious birds breed best if several pairs are kept within sight and sound of each other. Natural breeding is in the spring, but most will easily breed any time of year.

**Brood size:** 3 - 6 white eggs will hatch in 18 days on average, young leave the nest in 4 -5 weeks.

**Cage:** minimum 1 ft x 1 ft x 2 ft (30 cm x 30 cm x 60 cm)