

Bird Health Notes:



CHOOSING A COCKATIEL

General information

The cockatiel (*Nymphicus hollandicus*) is likely the best known and most widely kept member of the parrot family other than the budgie. These Australian natives with their elegant long tail and crested head, possess the exotic look of a cockatoo. They are a graceful, gentle and generally quiet bird well suited for a household with children. Larger than budgies and smaller than parrots, these entertaining birds are easy to maintain and provide endless hours of entertainment and companionship. A single bird may have better social interactions with family members than multiple birds in the same house. These birds are wonderful whistlers and do possess a limited ability to talk, although their voice is whistle-like in sound. Males tend to be better talkers than the females. They are beautiful flyers and enjoy lots of activity and play. These birds need to be entertained. Cockatiels love to chew, therefore providing bird-safe toys will easily distract them from the unwanted destructive chewing they may otherwise do around the house. Non-toxic, untreated branches or pieces of wood are readily available and fun for the birds to chew on.

Purchasing a Cockatiel

Cockatiels may be purchased from a pet shop or, better, a reputable breeder. When selecting a cockatiel, try to choose a young bird as it will 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 easy 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 vet.

Veterinary care

Cockatiels 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

- naturally occurring grey bird with yellow face and orange cheek patch with white on front part of wing
- colour mutations include lutino (white - lemon yellow), Pied, Pearl, Cinnamons and many combinations

Immature

- same as female

Sexing

Mature

- males have solid colouring on the underside of the tail feathers and long wing

feathers, they have a brighter yellow face and brighter orange cheek patch

- females have horizontal fine yellow barring on the underside of the tail feathers, yellow spots on the underside of the long wing feathers, they have a pale yellow face and duller orange cheek patch

Immature

- same as the adult female
- mature colouring occurs after first moult around 9 - 12 months

Weight: average 2.8 - 3.5 ounces (80 - 95 grams)

Size: average 12.5 inches (32 cm) in length

Life span: 10 - 14 years (maximum 32 years)

Diet: Consult your vet or see the diet sheet in this series.

Breeding: sexual maturity 8 - 12 months, prolific breeders year round but require large cages, lots of exercise, a large nest box and privacy

Brood size: 4 - 8 cream coloured eggs hatch in 18 - 20 days, young leave the nest in 5 weeks

Cage: Minimum 2 ft x 2 ft x 3 ft (60 cm x 60 cm x 90 cm)