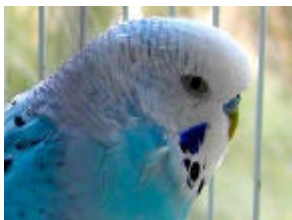


Bird Health Notes:



**CHOOSING A
LOVEBIRD**

General information

The Peach-faced lovebird (*Agapornis roseicollis*) is the largest and most commonly kept of the nine species of lovebirds. This small, colourful, short-tailed parrot originates from Africa. They are incredibly inquisitive, playful and possess a delightful, spirited sassiness. They are in general, poor talkers but commonly full of delightful chatter. They love to hide under paper, on shoulders under long hair or even in pockets. Although not generally destructive, they do enjoy chewing. Providing non-toxic fresh branches, pieces of paper and pet-safe toys will afford many hours of entertainment for this curious little pet. During breeding, lovebirds will take strips of chewed paper or other material, tuck it under the feathers of the wing and rump, then carry them back to the nest. This repetitive behaviour is often seen in lone female birds. The young single bird can be a wonderful, affectionate and interactive family pet. A “pair” of lovebirds will often bond strongly to each other even if they are the same sex. As a “pair”, they usually live very compatibly with each other and may even go through the antics of nest building. Despite the name “love” bird, these animals can be very territorial and aggressive in a colony situation or with other bird species.

Other common species of Lovebirds are the Black-masked Lovebird, Blue-masked Lovebird, and Fischer’s Lovebird.

Purchasing a Lovebird

Lovebirds may be purchased from a pet shop or, better, a reputable breeder. When selecting a lovebird, 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 easier to tame and adapt readily to new environments and situations. Importantly having a captive-bred bird also means that the wild bird population is not threatened further by catching and importing wild birds. This practice is bad both for the bird captured and transported as well as for the dwindling population left in the wild. Your new bird should be exposed early to different events (young and old people, males and females, other pets, car trips, visits to the veterinary surgeon, 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

Lovebirds 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 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

- depends on the species; predominantly green with orange, yellow, blue, black, white or grey markings, usually more dominant on the head, neck and rump

Immature

- similar to the adult

Sexing

Mature

- no external sex differences
- females weigh slightly more than the males
- surgical sexing or blood testing methods must be employed to differentiate between the sexes

Immature

- no external sex differences

Weight: average 1.5 - 2 ounces (40 - 60 grams)

Size: average 5 - 6.5 inches (13 - 16.5 cm) in length

Life span: 6 -12 years (maximum 14 years)

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

Breeding: sexual maturity - 8-12 months. prolific breeders in captivity

Brood size: 3 - 7 whitish eggs hatch in 18 - 24 days, young leave the nest in 5-6 weeks

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