

Bird Health Notes:



CHOOSING A MACAW

General information

Macaws (*Ara sp.*) are the largest members of the parrot family. These magnificent, vividly coloured birds originate from Mexico, Central and South America. They have a long tapered tail, strong body and large powerful beak. Macaws are intelligent, playful and inquisitive. This is a high maintenance bird. Considerable space is required to house this immense bird. They require plenty of affection and attention. Some birds will bond with one person, showing aggression towards others, some are nervous and excitable, while individuals and smaller species tend to be calmer and less awesome. Macaws are able to speak, but are not well known for this ability. Their vocalisations tend to be loud, harsh, penetrating squawks. Macaws love to play and chew. Their impressive beak can be exceedingly destructive. Providing a continuous supply of non-toxic, freshly washed, large branches and pet-safe toys will afford many hours of entertainment and exercise for your bird. Hardwoods such as oaks and maples will last longer. Despite the exotic appeal of Macaws, they may prove unsuitable for most households or family situations. The Blue and Gold Macaw, although mischievous, is likely the most appropriate macaw for a family. The Severe Macaw is almost half the size and has a gentle nature but may prove noisy.

Some commonly kept macaws include the Blue and Gold Macaw, Scarlet Macaw, Severe Macaw, Green-winged Macaw and the Hyacinth Macaw

Purchasing a Macaw

Macaws may be purchased from a pet shop or, better, a reputable breeder. When selecting a Macaw, 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. 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 veterinary surgeon.

Veterinary care

Macaws require regular, routine veterinary health check-ups. Your veterinary surgeon 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

- there are a rainbow of colour combinations depending on the species
- blue, green, yellow, red, orange, and rusty brown

- most have a white, naked area of skin surrounding the eyes, extending to the beak

Immature

- similar to the adult

Sexing: no external sex differences

Weight: average 9 - 50 ounces (250 - 1400 grams)

Size: average 12 - 40 inches (30 - 100 cm) in length

Life span: 25 - 35 years (maximum 60 years or more)

Diet: consult your vet

Breeding: sexual maturity at 4 - 7 years depending on the species. most are difficult to breed in captivity

Brood Size: 4 - 7 white eggs hatch in 23 - 28 days, young leave the nest in 3 months

Cage: minimum 2 ft x 2 ft x 3 ft (60 cm x 60 cm x 90 cm) for smaller species
minimum 3 ft x 4 ft x 4 ft (90 cm x 120 cm x 120 cm) for larger species