

10 Things You Need to Know Before Adopting a Bird

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1. Birds are not domesticated animals. Domestic animals are animals that have been bred for hundreds of years to live in the care of humans and are distinct from their wild ancestors. Birds commonly kept as pets are no different than their wild relatives - they are the native species of other countries.
2. Chlamydiosis (psittacosis) and avian tuberculosis can be transmitted through the air from birds to humans. These diseases can cause significant illness, especially for people with compromised immune systems. Birds also continually shed "feather dust" - particles of feathers, which may aggravate asthma in some people. Many homes with pet birds have HEPA-type air filters in rooms with birds to control allergies from bird dander.
3. Parrots, including lovebirds, parakeets, and cockatiels, are noisy and messy, and can be destructive. Vocalizing (squawking, chirping, talking) is an important part of any parrot's social communication. Birds eat continually throughout the day, dropping and discarding bits of food everywhere. Birds are instinctively programmed to chew and shred wood, whether it is a perch, toy, picture frame, or furniture. Birds will also chew electrical cords, paper, and curtains.
4. All parrots have long life spans. Depending on species, they may live 20 to 50 years or more. Caring for a bird is often a life-long responsibility.
5. Parrots are extremely social animals, and have been compared to human toddlers in the needs of their emotional and social lives but, unlike children, they never grow up.
6. Birds are active and inquisitive and must be provided with ample room to move about and play. An indoor or sheltered outdoor aviary or a flight safe room (windows covered, no cats/dogs, no ceiling fans, etc.) that will allow the bird(s) to fly is good for exercise. Birds with clipped wings can get exercise by climbing, swinging, and flapping, if provided with ample space, toys, and climbing structures.
7. All birds need a varied diet, not just seeds or pellets, but grains, beans, fruits and vegetables too.
8. Light exposure and sleep are very important to birds. Birds need at least 4 hours exposure to UVA and UVB rays from sunlight or full-spectrum lighting to provide them with vitamin D, which promotes vitamin A absorption, critical for upper respiratory health. Birds must have a minimum of 10 hours of sleep each night.
9. Birds are very sensitive to air quality. Unlike humans, a bird replaces nearly all the air in its lungs with each breath. Because no residual air is left in the lungs during the ventilation cycle of birds, they transfer more oxygen and more pollutants during each breath. Birds should never be exposed to tobacco smoke, chemical fumes (hairspray, cleaners, etc.), or Teflon coated materials. Exposure to some toxic inhalants can cause immediate death; chronic exposure to other toxic can lead to premature death.
10. Birds need veterinary care from a veterinarian that specializes in birds. Proper vet care for birds can be expensive. Your vet will probably recommend a complete examination and diagnostic tests when you first acquire your bird; in addition, she/he will probably recommend annual well-bird examinations. Smaller birds require the same vet care and regular examinations.

*This text was prepared by

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