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LOVEBIRDS

Lovebirds are small colorful parrots with short tails and relatively broad bodies. Free-ranging birds are found in central and southern Africa. The species most commonly seen in captivity are Peach-faced, Masked and Fischer's Lovebirds. The Peach-faced Lovebird is often regarded as the smartest of the three, but the other two have more gentle, pleasant personalities. Although color mutations are highly valued by some aviculturists, the inbreeding required to produce unusual colors has actually resulted in some negative genetic disorders, including decreased disease resistance, reduced longevity and hatching defects.

What to Expect from Your Lovebird

Lovebirds are relatively nondestructive birds that can make entertaining companions for families. They are mischievous birds that like to hide, such as under paper, in shirt pockets or in long hair. They are generally poor talkers, but they can easily learn tricks. Single lovebirds in the home can be relatively quiet and may be affectionate. In a colony situation, however, lovebirds do not live up to their name, as they are territorial and may kill new additions or weak birds that behave erratically (including youngsters).

Is Your Lovebird a Male or a Female?

Although a few lovebird species have distinct gender characteristics, males and females of the most common pet birds look very similar; therefore, endoscopy or laboratory methods must be used for sex determination. Some breeders have developed skill in evaluating behavioral traits (such as perching posture) to determine the gender. The females may slightly outweigh the males. Lovebirds are prolific breeders in captivity and the offspring are easy to hand-raise.

What Do Lovebirds Do All Day?

Although lovebirds can be appreciated as a single pet, they are very social and enjoy the company of another lovebird. The pair can spend hours preening each other and chattering. Lovebirds can be easily amused with simple toys. Because they love to chew, any toys must be free of toxic

metals, hooks, sharp objects or small, easily consumed components. Providing chew toys or fresh-cut branches from nontoxic trees is recommended for lovebirds. Check with local authorities for recommendations of safe trees.

Are Lovebirds Tame?

Young, hand-raised lovebirds are calm and adapt readily to new surroundings and handling procedures. They should be exposed early in life to novel situations (car travel, hospital visits, multiple visitors in the household, other household pets) so that they are well adjusted to these events. Parent-raised birds are difficult to tame.

What Your Veterinarian Looks For in a Healthy Lovebird

Clear, Bright Eyes (No Discharge)

Dry, Open Nares

Smooth Beak

Even, Reptilian Pattern on the Feet

Nails of Appropriate Length

Body Free of Lumps and Bumps

Smooth, Bright Feathers Without Color Breaks, Transparency or Ragged Edges

Alert, Erect Posture

How to Identify Your Bird

Two methods used to permanently mark companion birds for identification purposes are tattoos and microchips (both are injected under the skin). Individually numbered leg bands are not reliable for identification. Every bird has a unique scale pattern on the feet. Photographs of the feet (updated periodically as the bird ages) can be maintained in the bird's record to confirm its identity and to prevent fraud that can occur with other techniques.

Why The Wings Should Be Clipped

Lovebirds that are allowed unrestricted access in the home can encounter numerous physical dangers or toxins; therefore, wing clipping is recommended. The goal of clipping the wings is NOT to make the bird incapable of flight, but to prevent it from developing rapid and sustained flight and to prevent escape. Maintenance trimming is required eight to twelve weeks after the start of a molt cycle.

How to Keep Your Lovebird Healthy, Happy and Safe!

Limit supplementation to small amounts of pesticide-free fruits or vegetables.

Grit is probably not necessary with a formulated diet.

Provide clean, fresh, uncontaminated water (try using water bottles).

Remove and replace food and water containers twice daily to maximize activity in a healthy bird.

Provide opportunity for bath, shower, or misting. Provide toys free of toxic metals, hooks, sharp objects or small, easily consumed components.

Provide small diameter fresh-cut branches as perches. Check with local authorities for recommendations of safe trees.

Housing for your lovebird should:

be as large as possible.

be clean, secure, safe and easy to service.

be constructed of durable, nontoxic material (avoid zinc).

contain variable-sized perches made of clean, nontoxic, pesticide-free tree branches.
have food and water containers placed at opposite ends of the enclosure.
avoid having perches located directly over food containers.
contain toys and accessories that are moved around occasionally to prevent boredom and aggression.
offer occasional opportunity for protected outdoor exposure to fresh air, sunlight and exercise.

Lovebirds are very curious and will investigate anything new in their environment. That is why it is important to prevent their access to:

ceiling fans
hot cooking oil
Teflon-coated items (overheated)
leg chains
sandpaper-covered perches
tobacco and cigarette smoke
chocolate, avocado, salt, alcohol
toxic houseplants
pesticides
toxic fumes
easily dismantled toys
dogs, cats and young children
cedar, redwood and pressure-treated wood shavings
sources of lead or zinc.

Most Common Diseases in Lovebirds

Feather picking
Respiratory diseases
Bacterial, viral and fungal infections
Oral abscesses
Calcium deficiency syndrome
Neuropathic gastric dilatation
Vitamin A (beta carotene) deficiency
Toxicities
Chlamydia
Tumors
Parasites
Psittacine beak and feather disease virus
Many common disease conditions in Lovebird are the result of malnutrition. Visiting your avian veterinarian for routine health checks will help prevent many of the above diseases and support you in having a long, satisfying relationship with your Lovebird