

Birds As Pets: What You Should Know

Their bright colors, beautiful songs, and cheerful personalities have made birds popular pets for hundreds of years. The Humane Society of the United States/Humane Society International urges you to consider the following information before you bring a pet bird into your life.

Hundreds of thousands of birds of many species are caught in the wild for the pet trade. Never buy wild-caught birds. Buying such birds means supporting an industry that causes great suffering and needless death and threatens the very survival of some bird species. Up to 80 percent of birds who are caught in the wild die just in the course of capture and shipment. After purchase wild-caught birds suffer from stress and the inability to adapt to life in captivity, making them prone to medical and behavioral problems.

Only birds bred in captivity should be kept as pets. Parakeets, cockatiels, and canaries are always cage-bred; finches, parrots, and toucans are often wild-caught. Find out where the birds you are interested in came from, so you can be sure that they were bred, kept, and sold humanely. If possible, visit the breeding facility. Remember that birds are frequently available from animal shelters and rescue groups.

Each type of bird has unique needs that must be met. One simple rule is that the larger and less common the bird, the more difficult his care. Canaries are kept for their song, color, and activity; they do not usually offer humans a close bond. Canaries' small size and history of cage-breeding make them easier to manage. Likewise, parakeets (or budgies) and cockatiels are much easier to care for than are the larger parrots.

Medium- and large-size parrots (African gray parrots, Amazon parrots, cockatoos, conures, and macaws) are often wild-caught and are much more difficult to care for because of their size, strength, behavior, and nutritional and social needs. They require large, secure cages or aviaries; and they need to bond with human companions or other birds for mental and physical stimulation. Because they can live fifty years or more, these birds require a lifetime commitment.

Consider carefully what a bird requires and then consider as carefully what you are willing to provide.

For further information on wildlife issues, contact The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L St., NW, Washington, DC 20037. 202-452-1100 www.hsus.org

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