

## ----- Breeding

Breeding lovebirds is also a wonderful hobby. Hand-raising the youngsters can turn into a rewarding past time. Many owners enjoy seeing two lovebirds together & may wish to breed them. Sexing birds is always a problem - males and females look alike. Ask your pet retailer for more information as even trained professionals can get sexing wrong. If you have a mating pair, lovebirds breed well in captivity.

A natural nest is built in a rock crevice or within a compartment of the large communal nests built by social weaving members of the flock. Man-made structures such as the roofs of houses or bridges are sometimes used. A small box (wood or cardboard) or small prefab' nests will be adopted by them readily. They usually make good parents & can be quite prolific with the ability to produce a dozen chicks a year, given the chance. They are incubated for about 23 days & the young birds fledge after 43 days. To keep them healthy, lovebirds should have only 2 nests a year. Responsible breeding is important, do not over-breed any animal.

**Seek veterinary attention if your pet changes behavior or becomes inactive; this may indicate the pet has an illness.**

**As a pet owner, you are responsible for proper pet practices. Be prepared to take an ill pet to a Veterinarian & know which Veterinarian in your area can treat your pet.**



## check-list ✓

### *Your pet Lovebird requires...*

- Cage of appropriate size & wire size
- Perches of assorted sizes (must have)
- A variety of play & health conditioning toys
- Food / Seed dish(s)
- Daily water source
- Bathing dish or bowl
- Fruits & Veg ' dish (separate from seed)
- Cuttle bone or Mineral Block (supplement)
- Lovebird (appropriate) Seed
- Millet sprays (seed)
- Clips for doors & food treats



## Lovebirds

**A fairly small bird, 17-18 cm long with an average wing length of 106 mm & tail length of 44-52 mm.**

**Life Span: 12 - 17 years on average in captivity, may live longer, if well cared for.**



## ----- Personality

Full-size parrot personality in a smaller package. Their cheerful demeanor & gorgeous coloring makes them welcome in any home that can put up with occasional loud chirping. Their intelligence is equivalent to that of larger parrots - although most never learn to talk, they are able to mimic & imitate noises or whistles. They can be aggressive with other birds (even other pets, much larger than themselves) & will stand their ground but mostly, they adapt to other pets well. Lovebirds will happily perch on a human's shoulder & ride around with you all day. Don't be surprised if you are joined in the shower or accompanied at dinner as well.

All lovebirds are unique; they all have different temperaments. Some are calmer than others, while some are stubborn like terriers. All lovebirds require companionship, be it from a human or another lovebird. "Lovebirds" means just that. They will love their partner for life, be it bird or human. Two lovebirds may not interact with a human owner as much as if they would if they were by themselves. Two lovebirds may not get along & may have to be separated if the second is introduced after the original bird has taken to a human. Two of them, unless trained early on to interact with you, will usually become enamored with each other & not be as attentive or tame. Hands fed Lovebird babies are calm & gentle.

When a bird is raised by hand, extra time & attention has been given to ensure the bird "takes" to a human. The chick is hand nurtured by a person, supplanting the real parents with a person. The chick learns to accept food first, & then being handled by human's. **Hand raised birds require more attention & interaction than one that was not.**

They are not known to be good talkers & their sounds can be loud at times, but they make up for it in their entertaining antics. There are different types, with the peach-faced being the most common. Masked lovebirds, which have white eye rings, are also often kept as pets. They are beautiful with their bright feathers & many color variations or patterns have developed. You will be fascinated by the many colors & varieties. Intelligent & inquisitive, lovebirds are also very hardy & resistant to many of the diseases that threaten larger parrots.

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## ----- Feeding



Lovebirds may live over 20 years, provided with the nutrition & care they need. The diet mainly consists of seeds & berries. Lovebirds require a variety of foods, including vegetables, seeds, & fruits; nevertheless, **some human foods are unsuitable or poisonous for them, including dairy products, chocolate, sugared food, avocado, rhubarb, & strawberries.** Be aware that a lovebird that spends time with its owner will likely want to 'share' your meal with you. Be selective about your treats. Perishable food in the birds' housing for more than 24 hours is also likely to be unsuitable. Fresh is best! - for all animals. Grapes, carrots, beans, squash, corn, millet, quinoa & winter wheat are excellent foods. Fresh fruit & veg' should be served in a separate dish, apart from the regular seed (diced).

They also eat various manufactured food pellets & pastas. Suitable seed or pellet mixes include a large array of different seed types. Lovebirds can be fussy eaters & it is hard to balance the diet when seed mixes are used as the basic food for this species. Fresh greens, fruits & vegetables should be offered daily to all lovebirds. Pellet-eating birds tend to take these foods readily, especially when chopped & mixed with their pellets. Change any moistened foods frequently to prevent spoilage. Fresh corn on the cob is a particular favorite of most lovebirds. For a young bird, avoid weaning onto seed if possible (use a much healthier formulated diet for weaning). These contain vitamins and minerals so there is no need to add supplements to the drinking water each day. Offer calcium in the form of a mineral block or cuttle bone.

## ----- Care, Training & Behavior

Lovebirds are pretty easy to manage for most people. They are not as destructive or as noisy as larger counterparts. Most like to be a part of the family activities, whether you are reading a newspaper or doing household chores, they will be interested - if only to watch. If not properly socialized, they will discover their beaks as method of "disciplining us". Gently holding onto the beak while they try to bite you is a simple training technique to overcome the biting instinct. They can be aggressive towards other animals (including birds), if they don't know them or are jealous of the attention they are getting from their favorite human. It really is important to learn to understand them & to guide their behavior before an undesirable behavior has been established. Birds are no different than other household pets; they get upset or act out because they miss you if you ignore them.

A hand raised bird requires more attention than does a standard (natural) raised bird; You must be prepared to give these birds the level of physical interaction they will require. A hand-raised bird **MUST HAVE** interaction with you at least **TWICE A DAY** (this can include "fly" time, finger games, riding on you, baths in the sink or with you & their favorite; naps on your shoulder).



Lovebirds are great cage escape artists. Make sure cages are properly locked when birds are left alone, they are surprisingly smart & will find away out if they put their mind to it. Be aware of open doors & windows also. Get in & out of the house as quickly as possible if your birds are aloud to roam free when you are not there. Many owners trim their lovebird's wings in the summer months when the pet is more likely to escape through an open window or door. Wing trimming is not difficult & is easily learned from a veterinarian or pet supplier.

Use perches of different diameters to exercise the feet properly. Most veterinarians recommend fresh, natural branches as part of the cage furniture. Your lovebird will enjoy perching on these & peeling the bark from species such as apple, alder, beech, maple, eucalyptus, citrus & many others. Toys are highly recommended for such intelligent birds as lovebirds. Those with mirrors, open bells & chewable items such as rawhide & plaster are particularly valuable for lovebirds. Check with your retailer or veterinarian about toy safety for your particular bird. Always allow your bird(s) out once daily; check the "flight room" for safety first. Kitchens are not recommended as they contain many hazards such as hot pans, non-stick bake ware fumes & oil or grease. Make sure other family pets are kept separate. Don't forget to give your lovebird the opportunity to bathe several times weekly. A gentle mist from a plant mister is ideal. Many lovebirds also enjoy playing in a dish of clean water or under a tap.

Lovebirds are vocal birds. They make noise all day, but especially at certain times of day. Happy, healthy lovebirds mostly make interesting squeaks & pops, which is an appealing sound. As birds go, lovebirds are not regarded as a "noisy" breed. Lovebirds are also very active & love to chew things. When they are let out of their cage, it would be wise to watch them carefully, & protect any furniture, electrical wiring or anything else that they could possibly chew on. Their preferred medium is "paper", especially when they are in the "mating" spirit. Protecting your valuable papers is a must with lovebirds around. Lovebirds will shred paper as a nesting behavior. Females will chew narrow strips of paper and tuck them in their rump feathers. They will take them back to the cage and build a nest with them. Giving your bird some paper or a book to tear up entertains, exercises & keeps them busy.

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