

# Helpful things to know about your baby Lovebird

## Personality

Lovebirds are known as "little parrots with BIG parrot personalities". Just like larger parrots, lovebirds need lots of love, attention and challenging things to keep them busy. They love riding on shoulders, chewing on chew toys (like Shredders), swinging on swings and trying to disassemble knots and other toys. They are smart little jesters. When they snuggle in under your hair or cuddle up and fall asleep against your cheek, you'll know why they're called lovebirds. They are truly wonderful babies!



## Good food

Your baby has been lovingly hand-fed from the time that they were two weeks old. It's important that they continue to get the kind of food that they are used to. Your baby has been getting a mix of **Roudybush Mini**, **Kaytee Complete Cockatiel**, **Zupreem Cockateil**, a **wide variety seed mix** (with a lot of **safflower** seed), and soaked/sprouted winter wheat and beans. Check out the FeedingFeathers yahoo group.



Roudybush mini



Kaytee



Zupreem



seed mix



soaked/sprouted

These, along with other fresh food, are the best foods for lovebirds. Wheat grass, apples (no apple seeds), cherries, bananas, broccoli, lettuce, christmas cactus, spider plant, scrambled **organic** eggs (especially for hens laying eggs) are favorites at our house. Cuttlebone should always be available because they are a great source of calcium and it's good for keeping their beaks in shape. If your bird is eating at least 75% pellet food, then they should not be given extra vitamins or a mineral block. You can have too much of a good thing when it comes to vitamins. Sprouting or "soaking" seeds is a great source of yummy food - and it's easier than cooking. Look online and see! Don't feed any food that is moldy or doesn't smell right!

Lovebirds shouldn't be fed sand or grit because they grind their food with their beaks and not in a gizzard. Grit can cause problems if it gets stuck in their throats. Millet should be given in small amounts as treats - most birds get hooked on millet but it is the nutritional equivalent of popcorn - it's fun junk food.

## ***Dangerous foods/toxic plants***

Avocado, chocolate, alcohol, rhubarb, mushrooms or anything with mold on it...

**For a list of toxic and safe plants and tree branches please see-**

<http://www.plannedparrothood.com/plants.html>

<http://www.cockatielcottage.net/houseplants.html>

<http://www.mickaboo.com/toxicplants.html>

<http://www.birdsnways.com/articles/poisons.htm>

## ***Chemicals and Teflon (PTFE) – NON-STICK COOKWARE!***

All birds have delicate lungs - smoke, spray and plug-in air fresheners, insecticides and strong cleaning solutions should not be used near birds. **VERY IMPORTANT - Teflon (or PTFE) non-stick cookware releases very toxic chemicals when overheated! They can kill pets as well as making humans very ill.** Teflon coated irons and other items can also be very dangerous. There is new non-Teflon cookware available pretty much everywhere. \*NEW\* Some **ovens** now have PTFE for non-stick!!

## ***Changing water***

Change their water once a day. If you happen to see poop in the water, it should get changed right away. Some birds will put food in their water to "soften it up". Unfortunately, most of it ends up at the bottom of the water dish. When the weather is warm, this soup can get really foul pretty fast. Water dishes should never feel slimy inside.

## ***Cleaning cages***

**It's important to keep cages clean.** It can be challenging when you have a messy eater. Cleaning with vinegar and water or mild soap and water works pretty well. With The Flock, we use a temporary cage to hold each pair while we pressure-wash their cages. If you happen to have a pressure washer, it makes dried-on apple and banana just disappear! What fun!

## ***What kind of cage***

A cage with a horizontal measurement of 24 inches to 30 inches is appropriate. The bars of the cage should be no more than 1/2 inches apart. Have at least two ~1/2 inch perches in the cage and try to locate the perches so that your birds' behinds don't end up over the food or water dishes.

## ***Bird health***

All birds need some sunlight, not just because they like it, but also because it helps their feathers create vitamin D that their bodies need. In the winter, when the days are dark, a supplement that contains vitamin D is a good idea.

*This handout is provided to help keep our feathered babies happy and healthy. [crazyflock@hoothead.com](mailto:crazyflock@hoothead.com) 11/2007*

It's normal for lovebirds to get fluffy when they are heading off to sleep. They also sometimes make little crunching sounds with their beaks as they doze. Many parrots do this when they are winding down from a busy day.

Be aware of changes in your lovebird's disposition. Abnormal sleepiness, listlessness or lack of appetite are signs that your bird is getting sick. It's best to have your little one checked out by an avian vet before they get really sick.

***If your bird is continuously huddling on a perch with its feathers fluffed out, eyes closed, and head drooping or tucked under a wing then your lovebird is VERY sick and should be taken to the vet immediately!***

If you can't get to a vet, try to keep it warm and quiet in a cage where it can easily get to food and water. Feed it honey water, Pedialite or Gatoraid (but Gatoraid-like drinks often have more sodium than birds should have). Try to feed it a warm gruel. A lamp with a 60W bulb can be placed at one end of the cage so they can choose how warm they need to be.

Ask the advice of an avian veterinarian, or an experienced breeder. Remember that birds can go from sick to critical in a very short time so be careful if you decide to "wait and see".

Keep a supply of pet antibiotics on hand, and learn how to administer them before a health problem arises.

If a bird has been scratched or bitten by a cat, dog or other animal get them to a vet and on antibiotics immediately. Cats, especially, have bacteria in their saliva that is made to kill their prey - After an altercation, a scratched or bitten animal can seem fine and then be dead the next day.

## ***Emergency supplies***

QuickStop blood clotting powder, antibiotics like Avimycin, and Pedialyte to help sick birds stay hydrated. A 60 watt reflector-lamp is good for emergency warmth.

## ***Vet contacts***

We live on the Olympic Peninsula of WA State. Dr. Tyler at Greywolf Veterinary in Sequim is our favorite. Be sure to ask other bird owners who they recommend in your area or search online for avian specialists in your area. Find out where to go BEFORE you need them! If you can, keep "emergency vet money" set aside.

## ***Wing clipping and windows***

It's important to keep young birds' wings clipped. Both youngsters and adults can get freaked by something and fly straight into a window. Hitting a window at full speed can kill a bird, so it's important to take steps to slow them down. I feel that it's best to trim them back to a state where they will fly down at an angle when they try to fly. I have seen too many birds clipped back to the point where they drop like rocks. It's dangerous for the birds because they can't break their fall and they can't get out of dangerous situations (like other pets). I just try to tune it so that flying is hard work for them and that they can't get going too fast.

## ***Baths***

Most, if not all, birds love to take baths. A low, shallow tray is best so they can jump in and stand in the water while they flutter around. We use sushi dishes, but almost any dish will do. Avoid bowls with small bases because they tend to tip over when jumped on.

## **Toenails and pods/ropes**

If your bird's toes get too long and sharp enough, they have a chance of getting caught in clothing or in the cords of some toys. Some people have had bad toe problems with Happy Huts which are little triangular hanging tents. Birds love to sleep in the soft little tunnels. I've found that, if you can find them, the "furry" Happy Huts have much less of a chance of snagging a toenail than the felted huts do. A good test for surfaces is to see if the hooked side of Velcro sticks to it. If it doesn't, toenails probably won't either!

## **Online resources**

It's great idea to join the **LB\_List@yahoo.com** - The largest lovebird group on the internet! There are breeders and first-timers - including our flock! Also, for more holistic food info try -

<http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/FeedingFeathers/>

[http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/LB\\_List/](http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/LB_List/)

Other websites-

<http://www.birdsnways.com/articles/lbfaq.htm>

<http://www.lovebirds.co.nz/> - The Lovebird Mania site

<http://www.parrotparrot.com/>

<http://k.webring.com/hub?ring=lovebirds>

<http://www.parrotpages.com/links/lovebirds.shtml>

<http://www.tailfeathersnetwork.com/>

## **Lovebird books**

*The Lovebird* by Pam Higdon (an owner's guide to a happy healthy pet)

*Lovebirds* by Matthew M. Vriends (a Barron's book)

*The Lovebird Handbook* by Vera Appleyard (a Barron's book)

## **SUMMER HEAT - TIPS TO KEEP YOUR BIRDS SAFE**

The following is a brief article written by Dr. Greg Burkett, Board Certified Avian Veterinarian. It was sent to all his clients early last summer in an effort to caution them about the potential of birds overheating. This is the perfect time of the year to remind everyone what over-heating can do to birds.

"Like us, most of our companion birds are acclimated to inside air-conditioning systems. High temperatures can therefore be deadly to birds. If you take your bird outside for an adventure or for some fresh air during the summer months, be sure to keep them out of direct sunlight. If you travel with them in your car, NEVER leave them unattended.

In these and other warm weather situations watch them for signs of over-heating; these signs include open-mouthed breathing, panting (in birds it is called gullar fluttering), holding their wings away from their body, and behaving as if they are stressed."