

Use this checklist to make sure that a budgie is right for you and your family

- I have the appropriate location and housing for this pet
- I will provide a safe environment for this pet
- I can provide daily supervised time outside of the cage for my budgie
- I am aware that birds can be vocal and this is acceptable for my family and my neighbours
- An adult can provide primary care for this pet.

Average size: 17cm (including tail)

Life span: 10 years on average

FEEDING

High quality bird seed or pelleted diets should make up about 70% of your budgie's diet. The remainder should consist of fresh vegetables and fruits (see the safe food list). Budgies eat the inside of the seed and leave the husk, so it is important that you check that your budgie's seed dish is full of seed and not just husks. You can gently blow the husks off the top of the heavier seed and this will give you an idea.

Water needs to be chlorine free, always available and changed daily. Fresh vegetables and fruits should be given daily and discarded when not eaten within 24 hours. Like us, budgies appreciate quality and variety in their food.

SUPPLEMENTS

Always have available in your bird's cage a cuttlefish, grit and an iodine/mineral block. A cuttlefish is a valuable source of calcium that will also help to keep your budgie's beak trim. An iodine/mineral block will prevent the onset of goitre and provide essential nutrients for your bird. Grit is essential in aiding their food digestion.

A vitamin and mineral supplement such as Ornithon, in your bird's water, especially when moulting, breeding or in times of stress is also recommended.

The following is a collection of fruit, vegetables and other food that you can feed your bird. Fresh food should be thoroughly rinsed first.

- ▶ Apples (no pips)
- ▶ Apricots
- ▶ Broccoli
- ▶ Brussels sprouts
- ▶ Cabbage
- ▶ Carrots
- ▶ Cauliflower
- ▶ Chickweed
- ▶ Corn
- ▶ Dandelion
- ▶ Oranges
- ▶ Peaches
- ▶ Pears (no pips)Puha
- ▶ Silverbeet

DO NOT FEED lettuce, avocado, rhubarb, chocolate, alcohol, fruit seeds or caffeine as these can make your bird very ill. If in doubt about a food, don't feed it!

MILLET SPRAY

Budgies love millet spray and they will avoid their seed to eat this exclusively if they can. However, millet has a high fat content and is not a complete food so keep this as a treat only.

HOUSING

As with all pets it is best to provide the largest habitat that you can afford. A minimum size for one budgie is 45cmW x 45cmD x 60cmH. The bars on the cage should be no wider than 1cm.

Perches need to be a variety of textures, widths and lengths. This variety will exercise your bird's feet, keep its claws trim and aid in the prevention of arthritis. It also more closely simulates life in the outdoors.

A metal grate over the bottom of the cage will help to keep the bird off its droppings.

CAGE PLACEMENT

Keep your bird in the part of the house that is lived in and include your bird in your family. Keep it out of rafts and off the floor. Make sure it is out of the way of any other pets such as cats and boisterous dogs. Hanging the cage is a good idea.

TREATS

Birds need a wide variety of treats to alleviate boredom, help them to work for their food and exercise their minds. Treats should consist of no more than 10% of your bird's diet.

Budgies love treats like millet spray and treat bells, however, you must only feed as an occasional treat.

Cover your bird's cage at night with a light cover to prevent "night fright". This will also discourage your bird from chirping loudly with the sunrise.

CAGE CARE

Follow these simple rules to ensure the best possible care for your budgie:

- Don't place food or water containers underneath the perches – this will prevent possible contamination
- Avoid cooking near your bird with non-stick cookware as these can release harmful fumes
- Clean the cage and perches regularly
- Replace food and water daily
- Remove uneaten vegetables after 24 hours
- Replace perches, dishes and toys once worn or damaged
- Rotate toys regularly to avoid boredom
- Make sure there are no parts or toys in your bird's cage that are lead, lead-base painted, zinc or galvanised metal.

BEHAVIOUR AND EXERCISE

Your bird should be exercised daily by letting it out for a fly and socialising with your family.

Remember to initially cover all windows and mirrors as birds can't see glass. Close your doors. Make sure that other pets



such as cats and dogs are out of the room when your bird exercises.

If you have difficulty placing your bird back into its cage we recommend using a bird net. Training with treats may also help to entice your bird back into its cage. Allowing your bird to fly every day will keep your bird happier, healthier and fit.

GROOMING AND HEALTH

Budgies love to bathe and a lukewarm bath can be provided weekly (removing it once your bird is done). Alternatively, you can use a water mister or grooming spray.

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You should worm your indoor bird every six months and your outdoor aviary birds every three months.

Budgies like other birds moult once or twice a year. This can be a miserable time for them as they require quite a lot of energy for feather replacement. Moulting usually takes six to eight weeks to complete. A conditioning food, millet spray and vitamin supplement should be given during this time.

Pregnant women or people with weakened immune systems should consult their doctor prior to purchasing a budgie.

Always wash your hands before and after handling your bird.

The signs of a healthy budgie are:

- Active, alert and sociable
- Dry nostrils and bright eyes
- Beak, legs and feet should look normal
- Eats and drinks regularly
- Has smooth and well-groomed feathers.

The signs of an unhealthy budgie are:

- Sitting on the floor of the cage or low on the perch
- Wheezing or coughing
- Eye or nasal discharge
- Fluffed, plucked or dirty feathers
- Diarrhoea or discoloured stools
- Red or swollen eyes
- Favouring one foot
- White scales around the eyes, beak, legs or feet
- Appetite loss.

If you notice any of these signs please contact your veterinarian immediately.

