



HUNTER PETS
14 Waterloo Ave, Thornton NSW 2322
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BUDGERIGARS CARE SHEET

"Budgies" are the single most popular pet bird and are also called "Parakeet" in other parts of the world including the USA.

Baby Budgies can be easily identified as the feathering on the top of their head has a series of dark bars that continue down to the cere. The cere is the fleshy area above the beak where the nares (nostrils) are located. When the bird reaches the age of 8-12 weeks the bars start to gradually moult out until eventually the top of the head is a completely clear colour.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to guarantee the sex of the budgie at this early age, so if you want to be certain you are buying either a cock (male) or a hen (female) it is advisable to wait until the bird is at least three months old. At this age the cere has turned blue for a cock or brown for a hen. However, this does not always apply (Lutino and Albino in particular) and an experienced person is needed to determine the sex of some young birds.

Your new bird will probably be handed to you in a small 'pet box'. This is the best method of transportation, and ensures that your budgie will remain safe and protected until you are ready to install him in his new home. It is not advisable to attempt to transport birds in uncovered open cages.

It is critical that you take your new Budgie home directly without delay, avoiding heat and stress.

CAGES: Any cage recommended by your HUNTER PETS pet shop should be suitable for your pet as they have experience in the suitable housing of their livestock. Generally the larger the cage the better it is for exercise purposes. Those cages with horizontal bars enable the budgie to exercise his natural ability to climb around the cage using its beak as well as its claws. Adopt the following procedure when letting your budgie out of the transport box and into his new cage.

First, site the cage in a room that has a relatively even temperature, away from draughts, and positioned not too near a window as this may cause too much exposure to temperature variations. It should also be placed in a position where



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it cannot be interfered with by small children and other pets. The cage should be set up complete with food and water and initially a small amount of seed should be sprinkled on the floor to ensure that the budgie has enough to eat while he is finding the seed containers. Natural thin branches from natives and fruit trees are extremely good for the long-term health of your Budgie and are recommended. When everything is ready (double check windows and doors), gently open the box and let the budgie walk into his new home. At first he may be a bit bewildered, and perhaps fly around wildly in the unfamiliar surroundings of the new cage. If he does not quickly settle down, a cloth can be temporarily draped around three sides and over the top of the cage to afford him some extra security. Over-excited children can stress a new pet so if children are present, be very conscious of their behaviour at this time.

Your bird should be left well alone on the first day to re-adjust. As he regains his confidence he will start to explore his new home. Very young birds may just sit on a perch or the floor, and the seed scattered on the floor ensures that he finds enough to eat during this time. If after 24 hours a baby bird has not moved around and shows no sign of eating, then please contact the shop immediately and seek their advice. They may decide to put him back with his former companions until he is eating well again and has regained his confidence. This problem arises very rarely and should not be of general concern.

FEEDING: Budgies are very easy birds to feed and all HUNTER PETS pet shops can supply a basic budgie feed mixture consisting of a balanced fresh seed diet. Always ask for a mixture similar to that on which your pet has been previously fed. As with the water container, the seed dishes should be checked every day, as budgies shuck the seeds they eat and leave the empty husks on the top of the seed dish. These shucks should be blown away thus revealing the whole uneaten seed below. Millet sprays can be provided in small quantities as a treat, but not to excess as they can be fattening. Honey bells and seed bars and other treats may also be offered to provide a variation in diet. Another essential is good quality shell grit; this helps part of the bird's digestive system grind up the seed after it has been swallowed.

Cuttlefish and a mineral block should also be offered, as these provide calcium, other minerals and trace elements that may be lacking in the seed diet. Small quantities of fresh green-food may also be provided in the form of well rinsed pieces of fruit and/or vegetables. Always rinse this food as it is possible for residual toxic pesticides to remain on some produce.



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TOYS: It is a mistake to fill your pet's cage with toys especially in the early days when he is adjusting to his new surroundings. Toys should be introduced gradually, starting with, say, a mirror, then a ladder, then on to other toys that provide environmental enrichment. Rather than fill the cage with toys, it is better to change the actual toys from time to time to afford some variety for the bird. If your family are all out at work every day, the best 'toy' could be another budgie - if your cage is of a suitable size. These little birds are gregarious by nature, and welcome their own species for company.

TAMING/TEACHING TO TALK: To hand tame a pet Budgie takes time and patience. If your new Budgie was not purchased already tamed and it is a young bird, you can hand tame it yourself. Initially all you should do is position your chair right next to his cage during the evening, until your regular presence has created a confidence in him. Wing-clipping and "tunnelling" (allowing the bird to climb up through your half closed fist to finger tame the bird) should both be discussed with your pet shop staff as they require some expertise. The next step in taming is to place your hand inside the cage talking quietly all the time, until he becomes accustomed to its presence and ceases to fly around the cage. Eventually he will walk across your palm, and will even perch on your finger. Before bringing a Budgie out of its cage on your hand, make sure that all doors are shut, fireplaces guarded, and windows are closed and curtained. All ornaments that might be knocked down should be removed. Initially it is advisable to stop your pet from flying off by carefully placing a thumb gently over his foot. If you are anxious about being bitten, leave this training to someone else. Leave him on your finger for less than a minute then return him to the cage, repeating on successive evenings until he is used to the procedure. Care must be taken not to startle the bird, if he should start to fly about nervously leave well alone until he settles, then gently approach and try to pick him up. If he flies off around the room, do not try to chase him or weeks of gaining confidence will be lost. Both cocks and hens may be taught to speak, so do not stop training if your youngster matures into a hen.

BATHING: Feather disorders can occur through feathers becoming too dry due to lack of an open bath of water so offer a shallow bath occasionally. Another way of supplying this necessary moisture is to lightly mist or spray the bird in the morning; this allows plenty of time for him to dry before he roosts in the evening. Your pet shop will be able to supply a mist spray suitable for his job and also a conditioning solution to add to the spray that will ensure his feathers are kept in top condition and clean. Some budgies enjoy using a bath, but not all.



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SANDSHEETS: Do not worry if your budgie chews up the sandsheets you have provided on the floor. This is a natural habit of many small parrots and does not do any harm. However, if you prefer, obtain some clean cage sand from the pet shop and place this on the cage floor and just like sandsheets, replace the sand regularly.

COVERING UP AT NIGHT: Where the cage is in a room that is adequately heated and the bird settles down naturally, the need to cover-up may not arise. It is advisable to cover up the cage if the room becomes much colder as night wears on. This protects your bird from chilling, but once started should be continued or the bird may become stressed if left without its usual protection.

HEALTH: Properly cared for, your pet will live a long and happy life, but certain illnesses can strike, the commonest symptom being diarrhoea and wheezing. If your pet appears to be listless, with feathers fluffed up, and apparently wheezing, keep him warm. Your HUNTER PETS pet shop can supply medication for worming and other preventable disorders but will suggest that you take the bird to a vet if a serious disease is suspected. Diarrhoea can be the result of feeding an excess of green-food, mouldy seed, or food that may have been contaminated by rodents or insects. Again, your HUNTER PETS pet shop will make a number of useful suggestions but most likely advise you to consult a specialist vet. Remember, delay in accurate treatment could kill your bird.

Another problem which may arise is red mites. These parasitic mites feed on the blood of your pet. They may be found on the ends of perches where they rest during the day, and appear as a small red blob. They are easily killed with an efficient spray obtainable from your HUNTER PETS pet shop. Overgrown beaks and toe-nails can usually be dealt with by your pet shop.