



ANIMAL ANTICS

BUDGIES AS PETS

Budgies are colourful, attractive, sociable birds that are easy to keep and look after. They originate from Australia and can live up to 15 years - so choosing one as a pet is a long-term commitment.

HOUSING

Budgies can be housed indoors in a large wire cage with a plastic base or outdoors in a purpose-built aviary. The cage should have some horizontal bars on it to allow climbing - this means many round cages are unsuitable. Bars should be no wider than 12mm apart to prevent escape. Kept outdoors, your aviary should allow room for the birds to fly around properly. Budgies kept indoors will need to be let out of their cage daily to exercise - make sure you keep all doors and windows closed when you do this. Covering the cage with a cloth at night will encourage your Budgie to settle down for sleep.

You should provide a bath for your bird, either fixed to the outside of the cage or a shallow bowl placed inside the cage - although some birds may prefer to be sprayed with tepid water instead.

TYPES OF BUDGIE

Budgies come in a vast array of colours and markings including pied, spangled, opaline, blue, green, grey, yellow faces, lutino and albino.

FEEDING

Budgies in the wild eat a wide range of seeds, grains, and vegetation. A good-quality Budgerigar / Parakeet mix makes a good basic diet although supplements may also be required such as cuttlefish which acts as a vitamin supplement, and also helps grind the beak down. Small pieces of fresh fruit and vegetables may also be given as treats and fresh drinking water should always be available.

EXERCISE & ENTERTAINMENT

Budgies are intelligent and inquisitive birds that enjoy playing and climbing. Toys are essential to stimulate them mentally and physically - especially important for birds kept on their own. Budgies can also be taught to mimic sounds and talk. If they hear the same words repeatedly from the same person they may pick them up and begin mimicking the words or phrases. A solitary bird will need more attention and affection than a pair or group and should be handled every day.

HANDLING

With patience, Budgies can become quite tame although it is essential they are trained from an early age, and by one person only. The first step is to get the bird used to being stroked inside its cage - use a stick or perch, not your hands. Start by gently stroking its chest a couple of times a day, then encourage it to jump onto the stick. Next, repeat the whole process through the door of the cage rather than the bars. Finally, repeat again, using your hands this time instead of the stick. This is a gradual process that may take several weeks but usually works in the end.

To pick up your Budgie, ensure your palm covers its back and wings while your middle and index finger surround the bird's neck. Be gentle - Budgies will bite if they feel stressed. If catching an aviary bird use a padded rim net and never try to catch it in mid flight - always wait until it is perched safely.

COMMUNITY

Budgies can be kept alone but prefer the company of their own kind. They can be kept in pairs (hens with cocks) although if just keeping a few birds together, either sex should be fine. For larger aviaries it's usually best to keep more hens than cocks - otherwise the cock birds may fight over the hens.

HEALTH

Budgies can catch Scaly Beak, a contagious condition that requires immediate treatment by a vet. If you are worried about any aspect of your Budgie's health, seek advice from your veterinarian. For a healthy life, your Budgie needs the following:

- A good balanced diet with no sudden changes
- Plenty of toys to keep them amused
- Water bottle and feed bowls cleaned daily
- Their nails clipped several times a year - ask your vet for advice
- A daily bath - essential for their preening activities
- Regular exercise outside their cage

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