

Budgies

Melopsittacus undulatus

Introduction and Origin

The budgerigar is a small nomadic species of bird, found living throughout Australia, with the exception of coastal regions. Budgies tend to migrate seasonally around the country in search of abundant food and water. Large flocks of one hundred or more are commonly seen feeding on

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the seeds of grasses and herbs. Wild budgies are hardy little birds, as they may have to endure days without water. These amazing little birds are one of the world's

favourite pets due to their low maintenance, ease of breeding, ability to be tamed, and their intelligence which makes teaching them to talk and whistle relatively easy. The average captive lifespan of a captive budgie is 7-10 years.

Getting Your Bird Home

Birds travel better in cardboard boxes or cages that provide good ventilation, but restrict visual stress. While travelling in the car, try to place the bird in a position out of direct sunlight, and away from noisy car speakers, which may cause stress.

When you arrive home ensure that your cage has been thoroughly cleaned with an avian safe disinfectant such as Avi-Safe ® and before releasing the bird from the box, place everything it will require such as water, seed, toys etc into the cage. Once the cage is set up, place the bird inside and leave him or her to acclimatise to the new surroundings. At night cover the cage with a sheet or cage cover, to prevent drafts and reduce visual stress.

What Other Birds will live with a Budgerigar?

Budgerigars by nature are robust, gregarious birds; they enjoy living in a colony with other members of the same species. Budgerigars are a moderately compatible bird, which can usually be housed in an aviary with various other bird species such as Cockatiels, Java finches, Diamond doves, Zebra finches and in some cases Neophema's. Care needs to be taken not to overcrowd birds of different species, as this can cause competition for perch space and food resources, which may result in fights. Budgerigars are not ideally housed with more dominant species like members of the



rosella, lorikeet and lovebird families to name a few. Always ask about compatibility before purchasing another species and remember that the individual temperament of each bird plays an important part in compatibility. Not all birds will be compatible under the same circumstances.

Diet & Water

Budgerigars are predominantly a seed-eating species so their captive diet should consist of a good quality budgerigar seed mix, which should consist of a variety of seeds such as french white millet, Japanese millet, hulled oats, and pannicum. Complete diets such as Vetafarm Budgie, Canary and Finch Crumbles ® may be used as a seed substitute or fed as a dietary supplement, remembering always to slowly add or wean birds on to new foods over several days to weeks. Grit assists with digestion, and therefore is an important part of any seed eating birds diet.

Seed alone is not a complete diet it lacks many important vitamins and essential minerals. In order to complete your birds diet you should supplement their seed mix or pellet diet, daily with small portions of fresh fruits and vegetables such as diced apple, carrot, beans, peas, corn (Kernels or Cob), broccoli and leafy greens like spinach. Remember never to feed birds lettuce or avocado. If fresh fruit and vegetables cannot be provided

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daily a Vitamin supplement such as Soluvet® can be added to the birds water, two or three times a week. To provide calcium and iodine, cuttle bone and iodine bells can also be provided.

All birds should have a fresh supply of water, changed on a daily basis. Used glazed stoneware or terracotta bowls and position in the shade away from perches.

Health and Quarantine

Kellyville Pets tries it's best to provide customers with healthy, quality pets, but we recommend that any new bird whether purchased from a pet store or obtained by any other means, be quarantined for a period of no less than 30 days in a dedicated hospital/quarantine cage, which is isolated from all other pet birds. As prevention is always easier than cure, your bird should be sprayed with an insecticide such as Avian Insect Liquidator® every six weeks to kill and prevent mite and lice infestations. Worms can be fatal so treatment and prevention are a must. The use of a broad-spectrum wormer such as Worm-out Gel® will kill any worms present in the new arrival. Don't forget to repeat this worming treatment in a fortnight's time and routinely worm your birds every three months. If any bird appears unwell during its quarantine period, please seek veterinary advice.

Once the quarantine period is over, you can release your budgerigar into an aviary if you wish, but remember to always release birds into a new environment in the morning and certainly not after 3pm in the afternoon. By doing this your new bird will have time to find food and water sources, make friends and settle into a safe roosting (sleeping) position in the afternoon, ultimately resulting in less stress and a smoother transition.

Colouration and Sexing

In the wild the adult budgerigar is seen in its original colours, of bright green chest, abdomen and rump. The covert feathers of the wings are a dusky black to brown with yellow edging, while the primary flight feathers are black to brown with occasional yellow flecking and the tail is green at the base turning blue to black at the tip. The head has a yellow mask with several black spots on the checks, the top of the head is covered in black bars that begin around the eye's and continue down

the back of the head to the shoulders. In captivity many colour variations (mutations), have evolved such as Lutino, Albino, Harlequin, Cinnamon, Pied, Yellow Faced, Clear Winged and the Spangle. Young budgies are often called bar heads due to the prominence of the bars which extend from the cere (The featherless area above the top beak, containing the openings to the nostrils), over the top and down the back of the head to the shoulders. As young budgies mature the bars at the front of the head fade to the point around the eyes.

Budgerigars would have to be one of the easier birds to sex; mature males have a blue cere and females a tan to brown cere. Young budgies when they leave the nest have mauve to purple ceres.

As they mature the cere will begin to change colour with the first area of colour change appearing directly around the nostrils. For young males the nostril area will begin to display the blue colouration, while females

begin to display white, or sometimes tan.

Coloured birds such as albino, pied, cinnamon, lutino etc; are all sexed the same way, although the degree of cere colour in harlequin birds is usually less intense, so the cere colour for males may appear purple, while the female cere may appear light tan.

Housing and Breeding

If your new budgerigar is going to be an indoor pet, a cage no smaller than 18" (W) x 14" (D) x 20" (H) is recommended, this will give your pet enough room to spread and exercise his/her wings without the risk of injuring them on the wire sides of the cage.

Budgerigars usually breed well in an aviary of approximately 3ft(W) x 6ft(D) x 6ft(H), some pairs may breed year round although they generally breed more prolifically from August through to late January. Budgerigars require a breeding box with dimensions of roughly 6"(W) x 10(D)" x 6"(H), the acceptance of nesting material depends on each individual hen. They usually lay between 2-8 eggs, which are incubated by the hen and raised by both parents. Incubation usually takes between 19-21 days and the chicks remain in the nest for approximately 6 weeks, weaning follows soon after.

Further information on diet, hygiene, worming, vitamins, bird stress, licensing, Avian Vets and much more is

**Learn more
from the team
at Kellyville Pets**

At Kellyville Pets, we encourage responsible pet ownership.

Phone 9629 3282 OPEN 7 DAYS
106B Windsor Rd Kellyville NSW 2155
www.kellyvillepets.com.au

