

Canaries

Serinus canaria

Introduction and Origin

The Wild Canary is common to the Atlantic Islands of Azores and Madiera, as well as on the Canary Islands of La Palma, Hierro, Gomera, Tenerife, Gran Canaria, and Lanzarote. They are not considered migratory, but inhabit pine and laurel forests, open woodland, hillside scrubland, lower areas around civilisation, and in gardens and orchards. Since its introduction into captivity, it has been selective bred by bird hobbyists to produce many different types and colours.

Did you know
Canaries are
actually part of the
finch family?

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, nest boxes, 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.

What other Birds will live with a Canary?

Canaries by nature are robust, gregarious birds; they enjoy living in a colony with other Canaries. They are a moderately compatible bird, and can usually be housed in an aviary with neophema parrots and various members of the finch genus. 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. Canaries due to their small size are not ideally housed with larger and more dominant bird 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

Canaries are predominantly a seed-eating species so their captive diet should include a good quality canary seed mix, which should consist of a variety of seeds such as French white millet, Japanese millet, canary and pannicum. Complete diets such as Vetafarm Canary Foods® 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 bird's diet. Rape, Linseed, Niger, Hulled Oats, & Canary Song Food should all be offered in winter and spring.

Seed alone is not a complete diet it lacks many



important vitamins and essential minerals. In order to complete your bird's diet you should supplement their seed mix or pellet diet daily with small portions of fresh fruits and vegetables. Broccoli, figs, bananas, leafy greens like spinach and corn on the cob can all be offered (Score each row of corn kernels along the edge using a knife. This will allow easier access to the fleshy tissue inside.) Live foods such as mealworms or termites can be fed especially when Canaries are breeding. Remember never to feed your birds lettuce or avocado. If fresh fruit and vegetables cannot be provided daily a Vitamin supplement such as Soluvet® can be added to the birds water, two or three times a week. To supplement calcium and iodine requirements, 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 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.

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Once the quarantine period is over, you can release your Canary 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

Canaries come in a great variety of colours, and in two feather types. These types are 'buff', which is a feather with dispersed follicles creating a softer colour, and 'yellow', which have tight follicles, resulting in very strong colouration.

Canaries are sexed in two ways. The first way involves the appearance of the cloaca and surrounding skin, with the male having a distinct 'tube-shaped' cloaca, while the female has a more 'blister/pimple shaped' cloaca. It must be stressed that this form of sexing is dependant on age, time of year, and individual birds. The second way to sex canaries is by their song. Males will begin singing around July, and continue through the breeding season to early summer. Females, while they may make a few notes, will not break into full song.

Housing and Breeding

Canaries are ideally suited to life in a cage, or in an aviary. They have been bred for generations in cabinet-style housing, and this has led them to be quite unafraid of people. Because of this, they are also reasonably unaware of what a predator may look like, so care must be taken to house them with suitable birds, or protected from wild birds (eg butcher birds).

If you plan to have a single canary in a cage, then there are a few things to remember:

- A single male canary will make the best whistler
- Position the cage in an area with good light, is draft free, and has low noise.
- The cage should be no smaller than 25 cm(W) x 25 cm(D) x 30 cm(H)

Canaries can also be kept in aviaries or cabinets for breeding. If you plan to house them for breeding, then there are a few things to remember:

- Cabinets should be no smaller than 30 cm(W) x 30 cm(D) x 45 cm(H).
- Aviaries should be no smaller than 80 cm(W) x 80 cm(D) x 100 cm(H).

When canaries are preparing for breeding, they will require plenty of nesting material, and a suitable size cane or steel mesh nest. Nesting materials such as coconut fibre, nesting grass, sterilized feathers, and wool down should all be provided for them.

Canaries lay between 2-7 eggs, which are incubated by the hen for a period of 14 days. Chicks will remain in the nest for 3-5 weeks, with weaning occurring soon after fledging.

At Kellyville Pets, we encourage responsible pet ownership.

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Varieties

The Border Canary

is one of the most popular breeds of canary. They are most commonly yellow, but they can also come in green, cinnamon, variegated, white, and grey. Canaries will live for 5-6 years on average.

The German Roller

is an old breed of canary was specifically bred for its song. It originated in the Hartz Mountains of Germany, where many working families raised and trained singing canaries to supplement their income in the 17-1800's. By the mid 1800's canaries were readily making their way into the US. Between 1905-1915. over 3 million German Rollers were imported from Germany to New York. The German Roller sings softly with its beak closed. Its throat feathers rise as it sings, and the span of the song can be as many as 3 octaves. Young Rollers start to mutter a few notes at six weeks of age, and through mimicking other canaries, will achieve full song at around 18 months old. Their song rolls into itself, often sounding like there is no end.

The Gloster Canary

In 1919 Mrs Rogerson, a canary fancier from Gloucestershire, was interested in crest and crested birds but disliked the excessive amount of long, uncontrolled feathers. She wanted to breed a canary that was half the size of the existing crest, with a much smaller, neater feather. She paired crested German Rollers with small Borders (the Border of early 1900's was much smaller than today) in an attempt to breed a miniature crested canary. By pairing the smallest crests and the smallest borders, she created canaries of completely different appearance, earning her a separate class in show. The crested Gloster is referred to as the 'corona', and the un-crested partner the 'consort'.

The Lizard Canary

is the oldest surviving variety of canary and owes its introduction into England to the Huguenot refugees. Unlike the main breeds of canary that are the result of selective breeding, they are a distinct recessive mutation. There are two basic colours, gold and silver, which correspond to the traditional terms of 'yellow' and 'buff'. Gold birds have the dark ground colour of the feather edged by golden yellow, while silver birds have a fine margin of white. Both have a feather pattern that resembles the scales of a lizard. The cap of the Lizard usually covers the crown of the head, and roughly follows the line of skull, oval in shape, and extending from the base of the upper beak to the back of the head. The cap should also pass just above the eye, where there is a border of thin, dark feathers forming an "eye-lash". The colour of a Lizard canary is stronger, and more solid, in a young bird, than in a mature bird.

Further information on diet, hygiene, worming, vitamins, bird stress, licensing, Avian Vets and much more is available from the team at Kellyville Pets.

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