

# Cockatiels

**Nymphicus Hollandicus**

## Introduction and Origin

The cockatiel is known to be one of the smallest members of the cockatoo family. In the wild it lives a nomadic lifestyle and is seen in flocks ranging from several birds to several hundred. They live throughout central Australia in open or lightly timbered country, feeding on the seeds of

**Did you know**  
**Nymphicus Hollandicus**  
means "Goddess of  
New Holland."

grasses, herbs and trees particularly of the Acacia family. The average captive life span of a cockatiel is 10-15 years, considerably longer than their wild cousins.

## 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. 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. Do not use towels or similar as the bird may ingest cotton pills.

## Will my Cockatiel need a Feathered Friend?

Hand raised cockatiels bond more closely to their human family members than their own species, so they usually don't seek the company of other birds. By keeping your bird as an only child (bird) it will remain more closely bonded to you, although if you worry it may be lonely because your away from home a lot, you can house two together, but you should try to obtain them at the same time, preferably from the same clutch or at least two birds of similar age.

Cockatiels by nature are fairly passive, non-aggressive birds (unless protecting a nest/young) making them an easy bird to keep in captivity and one of the world's favourite birds. Cockatiels are a moderately compatible species that can usually be housed in an aviary with various other bird species such as Budgies, Canaries, Bourke's parrot, Scarlet Chested parrots, Princess and Superb Parrots just to name a few. Due to their



passive nature, cockatiels are not ideally housed with more dominant species like members of the rosella and lorikeet families, the Red Rumped parrot, and the Blue Bonnet parrot to name a few. Always ask about compatibility before purchasing any other 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

Cockatiels are predominantly a seed-eating species so their captive diet should consist of a good quality lovebird or cockatiel seed mix, which should consist of a variety of seeds such as french white millet, plain canary, hulled oats, panicum, saff flower and sunflower. Complete diets such as Vetafarm Parrot Pellets® 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. 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, chilli and red capsicum. Remember never to feed

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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 provide calcium and iodine, cuttle bone and can also be provided.

All birds should have a fresh supply of water, changed on a daily basis. Stainless steel bowls are best and the easiest to clean.

## 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 cockatiel 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 smoother transition.

## Colouration and Sexing

In the wild the cockatiel is seen in its original colours, of deep grey, with a striking white band along the edge of each wing. A yellow mask with orange cheek patches covers the face and at the top of the head sits a yellow crest, typical of the cockatoo family. In captivity many colour variations (mutations), have evolved such as Lutino, Pearl, Platinum, Cinnamon, Pied, Silver and variations of these colours sometimes with either White or Pastel faces.

At Kellyville Pets, we encourage responsible pet ownership.

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Learn more  
from the team  
at Kellyville Pets

Sexing cockatiels is usually fairly easy; for birds over six months in age the cock usually has a bright yellow face with deep orange cheek patches and no barring or spotting under the wings or on the tail. The hens face lacks bright colouration and usually appears grey or light yellow with dull orange cheek patches. The hen also has bars and spots present on the underside of the wings and on the tail.

Juveniles are grey in the face and usually carry some bars and spots under the wings and on the tail, an inexperienced eye may confuse them with females, but as young cocks start to mature the bars and spots will disappear.

Coloured birds such as pied, cinnamon, lutino etc are all sexed differently. This is done by feeling the pelvic area. A male

will have pointy pelvic bones, whereas a female has rounded and very flexible pelvic bones.

## Housing and Breeding

Only tame or hand raised Cockatiels should be kept in indoor birdcages. Mature Cockatiels should always be kept in an aviary or a cage large enough for them to fly in.

Cockatiels usually breed well in an aviary of approximately 5ft(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. Cockatiels require a breeding box with dimensions of roughly 10" x 10" x 12" high and the provision of a good nesting material. They usually lay between 2-8 eggs, which are incubated and raised by both parents. Incubation usually takes between 19-21 days and the chicks remain in the nest for approximately 5 weeks, weaning follows soon after.

**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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