

Lovebirds

Agapornis roseicollis roseicollis*, *Agapornis personata fisheri

Introduction and Origin

The wild Lovebird lives throughout the southwestern regions of Africa. These active little birds spend several hours each day in flight while searching for food and water sources. Lovebirds inhabit relatively dry tropical environments with altitudes of up to 1600 meters. They are accustomed to warm, humid weather but can acclimatise to cooler environments. Care needs to be taken to protect them from cold drafts. They usually live in small close knit groups of several pairs with the average captive life span of a lovebird being 10-12 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 that 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 its 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 Lovebird?

The lovebird family are by nature fairly territorial little birds. Newcomers to a cage even of the same species may be viciously attacked, sometimes resulting in wounds that may require treatment. It is recommended that only members of the lovebird family be housed together. These species include the fisher's lovebird, the nyassa lovebird and the masked lovebird. Fights and squabbles are quite common amongst lovebird colonies although they are usually not serious and can be minimised with good husbandry practices: (A few tips)

- Never overcrowd lovebirds as limited space can lead to competition for food, perches and nests.
- Always provide more breeding boxes than number of breeding pairs.
- Provide more nesting materials than required, so fights won't occur due to competition for them.
- Try to maintain birds in sexed pairs, so each bird is paired to a compatible mate. An unpaired bird of either sex may upset the breeding performance of the colony, by attempting to court or steal a breeding partner.

Please Note: Not all birds will be compatible under the same circumstances as individual temperaments play an important role in compatibility.



Diet & Water

Lovebirds are predominantly a seed-eating species so their captive diet should consist of a good quality lovebird seed mix, which should contain a variety of seeds such as french white millet, plain canary, hulled oats, panicum, Japanese millet, saff flower and sunflower. 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 bird's 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 daily a Vitamin supplement can be added to the bird's water, two or three times a week. To provide 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 its 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. Your bird should be sprayed with an insecticide every six weeks to kill and prevent mite and lice infestations. Worms can be fatal so treatment with a broad-spectrum wormer will kill any worms present with repeated worming every three months.

If any bird appears unwell during its quarantine period, please seek veterinary advice.

Lovebirds

Once the quarantine period is over, you can release your peach-faced lovebird into an aviary if you wish, but remember to always release birds into a new environment in the morning. 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.



Sexing

Lovebirds are said to be sexually monomorphic, meaning that both the cock and the hen appear almost identical in size, shape and colour.

Determining the sex of a lovebird without using DNA or surgery, can only be estimated by comparing differences between the pelvic bones of the cock and the hen, using your finger. The pelvic bones of the cock are relatively close together and have a more defined point at the end of the bones. The mature hen on the other hand should have a distance between the two bones; they should feel slightly flexible, and rounder at the ends, enabling the pelvis to stretch and permit the passage of an egg.

Sexing young lovebirds can be extremely difficult. An immature hen's pelvis will feel close together, as it hasn't been stretched due to the passage of her first egg.

Housing and Breeding

If your lovebird is going to be an indoor pet, a cage with dimensions of 20" (W) x 16" (D) x 25" (H) is recommended, as these are extremely active little birds they require space to exercise. A cage that provides insufficient space for toys and regular activity may result in birds that become overweight and bored, which can result in feather picking and other behavioural problems.

Lovebirds 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. A breeding box with dimensions of roughly 11" (W) x 8" (D) x 8" (H), and the provision of nesting materials

will be required. The hen usually lays 3-8 eggs, which are incubated and raised by both parents. Incubation usually takes between 23-25 days and the chicks remain in the nest for approximately 6 weeks, weaning usually occurs within a fortnight of chicks leaving the nest.

Varieties

Peach Faced Lovebird

In the wild the peach-faced lovebird is seen in its original colours, of green chest, back and abdomen with bright blue rump. The flight feathers are brown to black and the face has a peach coloured mask. Captive breeding of the peach-faced lovebird has produced many colour variations which do not occur in the wild, such as lutino, blue, grey, albino, and pied, just to name a few.

Masked Lovebird

In the wild the Masked Lovebird is seen in its original colours, of bright green, back, wings and abdomen. The chest and neck is yellow, while the face and head has a black mask, hence the name. The eye's are brown, surrounded by white eyelids (the periophthalmic ring), the beak is a deep red, the rump is bluish and the legs and feet are slate blue. Captive breeding of masked lovebirds has produced some colour variations (mutations) but the most common in Australia being blue.

Fisher's Lovebird

In the wild the fisher's lovebird is seen in its original colours, of green chest, back, wings and abdomen. The neck is a golden yellow and the cheeks and throat are orange. The eye's are brown, surrounded by white eyelids (the periophthalmic ring), the beak is an orange-red and the legs and feet are slate blue. Captive breeding of fisher's lovebird has produced many colour variations (mutations), which do not occur in the wild, such as lutino, blue, lime and albino.

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



**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

Kellyville Pets
WE LOVE PETS