

Cockatiel Guide

A new pet can be a fantastic companion, but sometimes the novelty can wear off (some pets live for a very long time). You may find that regular cleaning, feeding and handling becomes a time consuming chore. Please try to handle and play with your pet as often as possible, you will find that you will be rewarded with a much happier and friendlier pet. If you are not 100% sure that you or your children will be able to give your pet the attention that it needs then please think twice.

Attributes:

Average Adult Size: The smallest cockatoo, cockatiels grow to just 12 or 13 inches from their head to tail. A healthy weight is between two and four ounces.

Average Life Span:Cockatiels regularly live 15 to 20 years with proper care. Some people have reported birds that lived as long as 30 years, though this is rare.

Cockatiels are among the most popular pet birds. Small parrots with a variety of color patterns and a crest, they are attractive as well as friendly and easy to tame. Due to their small size, cockatiel care and taming are easier than many other parrot species. They are capable of mimicking speech, although they can be difficult to understand. However, they are quite good at whistling and can often be taught to whistle tunes.

Background:

In their native Australia, Cockatiels are known as quarrions or weiros and they primarily live in the outback. They were discovered in 1770 and are members of the cockatoo family because they exhibit many of the same features and habits as the larger bird. In the wild, they live in large flocks. Cockatiels became popular as pets in the 1900s. They are easy to breed in captivity and their docile, friendly personalities make them a natural fit for home life. These birds, along with all native animals, can no longer be trapped and exported in Australia.

The wild cockatiel has a gray body with a yellow face and crest and orange cheek patch. The colors on the face are brighter and more vivid in the male, and the female has bars on the underside of the tail feathers. Since they are bred in captivity for pets, several color mutations have been established over the years.

Feeding Cockatiels:

Variety is the key to a healthy diet for any parrot, including the cockatiel. Seeds can be a nutritious part of the diet but they are high in fat so they should only make up about 30 percent of the bird's diet. We recommend Garden State Pet Centers Small Hookbill House Blend / ABBA 1600-C/ Natures Garden Medium as the seed which is ideal for Cockatiels. However, with seeds, a wide variety of other foods should complement the diet. To keep your cockatiel healthy, offer a variety of fresh vegetables and fruit. Persistence might be needed before your bird will try new foods, particularly if they are accustomed to an all-seed diet. Proteins such as hard-boiled egg, legumes, and cooked meats can be offered in moderation. Sprouted seeds are also an excellent way to add variety to your bird's diet. With any bird, avoid avocados, chocolate, coffee, and salt because they can be toxic.

A cuttlebone can be provided as a source of calcium but contrary to the advice given in older references and by many pet stores, grit is not needed and can be harmful if your Cockatiel eats too much.

Housing Cockatiels:

Pairs of birds make good company for each other but they usually will not bond as well with their owners or mimic speech and sounds. A single bird is fine as long as you spend a significant amount of time interacting with the cockatiel on a daily basis. If your lifestyle doesn't allow this, a pair of birds will prevent loneliness and self-harming behavior.

These birds are naturally messy and they naturally produce a powder on their feathers. It is used in grooming and may leave a powdery coating on cages and accessories. Regular cleaning is necessary and many Cockatiel cages come with a removable bottom tray to make the task easier.

Cockatiels are active and playful and should have a large cage. Opinions on the minimum size vary, but a good rule of thumb is at least 24" long by 18" wide by 24" for a single bird. Bigger is better, as Cockatiels need space for horizontal flight and with this in mind, at Feather Fabulous Birds, we would recommend 36 inches long, 24 inches high and 24 inches wide as a good size for a pair of Cockatiels.

The spacing on the cage bars should be no more than 3/4-inch because any larger will create a safety hazard. Horizontal cage bars offer the best opportunity for the bird to climb and much-needed exercise. There should be space to place at least a couple of perches at different levels with enough space to comfortably move between them. Offering a variety of perch sizes, shapes, and textures will also help keep your Cockatiel's feet in good shape.

As with any parrot, exercise is going to make a Cockatiel happy and help maintain his physical and mental health. It's best to give your Cockatiel a good amount of time outside the cage as well. This is important for socialization and allows them to stretch their wings.

Warning:

Cockatiels are subject to a few household dangers. Avoid placing the bird's cage in drafty areas or where he can be exposed to cooking fumes like that from Teflon cookware. Both are known to make Cockatiels sick, and don't feed your bird avocados, chocolate, coffee, and salt.

More Info:

These little birds have a reputation as a gentle and docile bird. They are very affectionate and often like to be petted and held, though they're not necessarily fond of cuddling. Instead, they simply want to be near their owner and will be very happy to see you. You will also find Cockatiels to be playful and active. While they vocalize and whistle they are not as loud as some other parrots. The males are thought to be better at mimicking speech and whistles. Female cockatiels are quite good at mimicry, though. Either sex may pick up and repeat sounds from your house, including alarm clocks, phones, and even wild birds outside. Though they're generally friendly, an untamed cockatiel can nip. This behavior can be prevented at an early age by ignoring the bad behavior. Never scold the bird because this can cause him to become too timid around people. They aim to please, so reward good behavior and disregard the bad.