



Hand Reared Bird fact sheet

Check list

- A parrot cage with removeable grid (largest you can accommodate)
- A selection of suitable toys
- A rope perch
- A concrete perch
- Small parrot seed
- Small parrot pellets
- Coop cups
- Calci grid
- Bird litter
- Cage cleaner spray
- Mite & lice spray
- Wormer
- Avi-vite

Setting up your cage

Hand reared birds love attention and like to be involved in the family, with this in mind you should place your hand reared bird's cage where it can be with the family i.e., lounge room or kitchen. An ideal location for your hand reared bird should include filtered sunlight. Do not place your hand-reared bird too close to heaters or heating ducts. If you place your hand reared birds cage away from the main family areas your hand reared bird can become noisy as it will be calling out to locate its flock (you). Steps to setting up your cage First you should wipe out your cage using Cage Cleaner Spray, and then wipe it down with a clean cloth to remove any residue. Place a layer of bird litter in the bottom tray. This should be changed weekly. Position the main perch so that it is level with the food and water dishes. You should avoid placing a perch directly over food and water dishes, as your hand reared birds dropping will fall into them. Position your concrete and rope perches. Vary them so that your hand-reared bird has different heights throughout the cage to perch. Position your toys in the cage. Make sure that your hand-reared bird has easy access to reach them but that they are not in the way of the food and water dishes. Place your coop cups on the sides of the cage, but not directly above the food and water dishes. Fill your larger dishes, one with water and one with fruit and veggies, if you have a third dish as most parrot cages have fill this with small parrot pellets. Using your coop cups fill one with calci grit and the other with small parrot seed. The coop cups should be smaller than the food and water dishes.

Introducing your baby to its new home

Your Hand reared bird will have been sent home in a carry box, place this box inside the cage and open it. Allow your Hand reared bird to come out on its own. Being very inquisitive, it will not take long for your Hand reared bird to come out and explore its new home.

Keeping your baby healthy

Birds can be quite deceptive when it comes to their health, because in the wild if they show that they are weak or ill they will quickly be preyed upon. The best way to keep an eye on your baby is to be familiar with its droppings, know the normal texture and colour. The first signs of illness can be detected by noting a change in the droppings. We recommend you acquaint yourself with your local avian vet (avian vets specialize in complete bird health and medicine) and as part of your yearly health routine take your bird twice a year for a complete health check. There are many illnesses that can affect your bird. We have listed the most common ones that you should be aware of and some advice on treating them, in all cases of illness you should always consult your avian vet. As some of these illnesses can be transmitted to people, we recommend that you avoid allowing your bird to put its beak into your mouth or share food or drink from the same dishes and cups as you. Not only could these habits make you ill they can also cause your baby to become ill as well. You should clean your baby's home once to twice a week using either cage cleaner spray or avi-safe.

Mites & lice

Some of symptoms for mites and lice can be; poor feather condition, continual scratching and bald patches. We recommend spraying your bird and cage on a monthly basis with bird mite and lice spray. Always hold the bottle at least 30cm away from your bird and avoid spraying directly into your bird's face. Remove water and food containers before you spray the cage.

Worms

Some of the symptoms of worms can be; diarrhoea, weight loss and poor feather condition. We recommend worming your bird every three months with a bird all wormer such as Worm Out Gel. Simply follow the directions on the bottle and add the wormer to your bird's water. Never worm your bird on a really hot day as your bird can overdose itself.

Feather plucking

Feather plucking occurs mainly from boredom, emotional stress, poor diet, lack of bathing and illness. We recommend contacting your local avian vet if your bird shows any sign of pulling out its own feathers to determine the cause. We recommend leaving the radio on as a low background noise when you are not at home to prevent your bird from being lonely. Always have at least three toys in your bird's cage to keep boredom at bay. You can also use stop pick spray if it is caused by behavioural issues.

Coccidiosis

Coccidiosis can affect your birds digestive track, the most common symptoms are diarrhoea, lack of appetite and poor condition. Coccidiosis can occur through your bird drinking from water that is contaminated either by droppings, dirty containers or water containing the bug. We recommend using water guard in your bird's water to help prevent bacteria forming. Never place your birds water dishes directly under its perches and always provide fresh clean water and dishes. Sulphadim can be used for birds with diarrhoea. Always carefully follow the directions. If the diarrhoea persists for more than 24hrs immediately contact your avian vet for advice.

Psittacosis

Psittacosis can be life threatening to your bird. Some of the symptoms of psittacosis are, sneezing, diarrhoea, weight loss and fluffed up feathers. Psittacosis can occur by poor hygiene where your bird is eating food that has been contaminated by droppings or playing with toys that are contaminated by droppings. We recommend keeping your bird in a parrot cage with a removable grid to keep your bird from eating food off the floor that may have landed in droppings. Clean your cage twice a week using cage cleaner spray or avi-safe. All toys, perches and dishes should also be cleaned with cage cleaner spray or avi-safe. The only way to test for psittacosis is by a blood test conducted by an avian vet. Psittacosis can be successfully treated when detected early by oral medication and weekly injections by your avian vet.

Toys

Hand reared birds are quite intelligent so you need to occupy their mind to prevent them from becoming bored and self-destructive. You should place no less than three toys in your Hand reared bird's cage but not too many to clutter and reduce space in the cage. Once a month these toys should be taken out and rotated with three others to prevent your hand reared bird from becoming bored with its toys. Once a week you should thoroughly inspect and clean your bird's toys to ensure they are still safe and pose no harm. Rope toys should be trimmed if the ends start to fray. The best toys are rope/wood toys and acrylic toys. Hand reared bird's cage. This ensures the correct exercise and stimulation for your baby's feet. Cement perches are fantastic as they have different thickness and shape and also trim your baby's beak and nails. Rope perches are fun for your bird and are easily kept clean. You should clean all of your bird's perches at least once a week. We recommend using cage cleaner spray or avi-safe.

Diet

Your Hand reared bird will be happiest with a varied diet. There should be a fresh source of fruit and vegetables provided and replaced daily. Parrot seed can be fed as a treat and parrot pellets should be supplied daily to ensure your baby is receiving a complete and balanced diet. Fruit should be thoroughly washed and cut into small pieces before feeding, with all stones and pips removed. Vegetables can be fed raw partly cooked or steamed depending on your hand reared birds individual tastes; they also should be washed and chopped. The popular favourites are grapes, apple, strawberries, plums, nectarines and banana for fruits and potato (mashed), peas, corn, carrots, zucchini and beans for vegetables. Once a week add Avi-vite to your baby's water to ensure all vitamin and mineral requirements are met.

Bath time

Your Hand reared bird requires a bath at least once a week at a minimum. It can be done daily. There are many ways to do this. You can let your Hand reared bird join you in the shower and allow him/her to reach into the water at his/her own pace. You can get a shallow dish with warm water and allow your Hand reared bird to splash in it or you can use a spray bottle and lightly mist your handreared bird. If you choose the spray bottle ensure it hasn't been used for chemicals.

Bonding with your hand reared bird

Your hand-reared bird may be a bit nervous when it first comes home. It is a good idea to leave your hand-reared bird in its new home with food, water and toys for 24hrs before you start to handle it. When you approach your bird always make steady slow movements and talk to your bird in a low reassuring voice (the more you talk to your bird the more it will talk to you). Place your hand in the cage in front of your bird and tell it to “step up” always use this command when you want your bird to hop onto anything (never hold your hand above your birds head, this is very frightening for your bird). If your bird moves away or flies around the cage gently grab your bird from behind making sure your hand covers both wings. Bring your bird to your chest and stroke it from its head to its tail for about 20 min while speaking to it. This will calm your bird as well as bond it to you. This should be done several times a day for the first two weeks. This can also be done at times when your bird is frightened or hasn't been handled in a while. To keep your hand reared bird tame and affectionate you will need to handle and speak to it every day.

Training your hand reared bird

To get your hand-reared bird to sit on your hand, you need to hold your hand in front of your bird and gently push against your birds' stomach while saying, “step up”. Make sure your hand isn't too high up for your bird to easily step on to. Whenever you want to put your bird down i.e. on to a perch, you hold your bird in front of the perch so that it gently pushes on to its stomach and say “step down”. Eventually you will only need to say the commands and your bird will hop up or down.

Teaching your hand reared bird to talk

If you start at a young age, most Hand reared birds will learn to talk. Decide on your first word to teach your Hand reared bird, choose an easy one first like “hello”. Spend at least five minutes three to four times a day saying this word to your Hand reared bird. When your Hand reared bird tries to repeat this word you should show excitement and praise. Once your Hand reared bird has mastered its first word move on to your next. Some words will be picked up far quicker than others depending on how much your Hand reared bird likes the sound.

Wing clipping

Wing clipping is essential to the safety and wellbeing of your baby. Whenever a bird's wings are clipped both sides must be clipped evenly to prevent your bird from losing balance and landing too heavily. You should always have this performed by your avian vet so that your baby doesn't resent you and to prevent any serious damage or harm to your birds wings.

“The signs of love”

When your baby is comfortable with you it will develop a deep affection for you. One way of showing affection is by regurgitating food for you. You will know this is about to happen as your baby will pump its neck back and forth and will bob her head up and down. Try not to be disgusted by this, as you should feel flattered that your baby has bonded closely to you and wants to show its “love”.

Beak grinding and preening

Birds commonly do this when they are falling asleep. It is completely normal and shows that your baby is content and in good health. Your baby should take care of her own hygiene with daily preening and also by rubbing her beak on her perch to clean it after meals. If your baby suddenly stops this routine contact your avian vet as birds neglect their hygiene when they are ill.