



Cockatiel



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Cockatiels

Many aviculturists consider the cockatiel the smallest member of the cockatoo family. Bred in captivity for over 100 years, these popular birds are available year round.

Origin

Cockatiels are native to Australia and dwell in the interior of the continent. They are light to dark gray with a band of white on their wings, a yellow mask, a red cheek patch and a small crest. The normal gray cockatiel is the colour from which all mutations originate. Other mutations include lutino, albino, pied, pearl, cinnamon, silver and white head. They are approximately 30 cm (12 inches) in length and have a life span of about 15 to 20 years. Females have duller facial colours than males and also have barring on the underside of the tail feathers.

General Personality

Cockatiels have cheerful natures and their quiet, gentle dispositions have made them a favoured pet for all ages. Their piercing calls may strike some people as unpleasant, but a contented bird may use these tones only as a warning or an alarm. They are more likely to imitate noises, whistling and mimic words they hear often.

Food

Their primary food source should be a quality parrot pellet which is available at pet stores. This should be offered daily along with clean water, fruits, vegetables and occasionally a mix of seeds. Sunflower seeds are high in fat and should be offered only as a treat. Spray millet is an all time favorite treat for a cockatiel. Grit or gravel is not necessary for most caged birds.

Housing

Even though they are small in size they need a large cage to accommodate their long tails, high crest and large wing span. They are very active birds and need plenty of room to move. Cockatiels should be housed in cages with a bar spacing that will not let them stick their heads between, usually $\frac{3}{4}$ inch spacing. Natural branches that vary in thickness make good perches inside the cage. These branches relieve stress on the foot that can occur from standing on the same size of perch. Toys are an important part of a bird's life as they provide entertainment while inside their cage. Make sure you give your bird a variety of safe toys suitable for its size. Clean droppings from the cage bottom and perches daily.

Health Care

Wing trimming is essential for your bird's safety. The loss of a pet bird flying out an open door is devastating. Nail trimming is also necessary for proper grip on perches and a comfortable grip on arms and fingers. Most cockatiels love to bathe whether it is in a dish of warm water, spritzed with a pump sprayer or in the shower with its owner. Cockatiels should have a bath or shower at least weekly.

THE PARROT CLUB OF MANITOBA meets the 3rd Friday of each month at 7:30 pm at St. Alban's Church, basement level, 486 Rathgar (off Osborne). Check community announcements or contact the club in case of changes. Several members of the Parrot Club of Manitoba have cockatiels as pets and would be able to tell you how these birds are in the home environment.

Winnipeg veterinarians with an interest in avian medicine are:

Dr. Heather McDonald of Centennial Animal Hospital
Dr. Nancy McQuade of Winrose Animal Hospital
Dr. Carolyn Eickhorn of Winrose Animal Hospital
Dr. Birte Klug of Winrose Animal Hospital
Dr. Andrew Davidson of Corydon Animal Hospital
Dr. C. Skavinsky of Anderson Animal Hospital
Dr. Lisa Sawka of Charleswood Veterinary Clinic