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#### **Duty of Care:**

Every owner has a duty of care towards their animal. People should not take on the responsibility of keeping a pet unless they have the means to provide it with appropriate care and attention. This includes providing specialist treatment in the case of sickness or injury to prevent unnecessary suffering. Owners should arrange for their animal to be taken to a vet as soon as it becomes ill and be prepared to pay for any treatment themselves.

# Keeping Cockatiels As Pets



#### **Cockatiels:**

Colourful, active, inquisitive birds that are easy to keep and look after. They originate from Australia and can live up to 20 years - so choosing one as a pet is a long-term commitment. Cockatiels like the company of their own species so are best kept in pairs or larger groups. If kept indoors they will need regular daily exercise outside their cage and are at their most active during the daytime, sleeping once it gets dark.

## Housing

Cockatiels can be housed indoors in a large wire cage with a plastic base or outdoors in a purpose-built aviary. The cage should have some horizontal bars on it to allow climbing – this makes many round cages unsuitable. Bars should be no wider than 17mm apart to prevent escape. Kept outdoors, your aviary should allow room for the birds to fly around properly. Cockatiels kept indoors will need to be let out of their cage daily to exercise – make sure you keep all doors and windows closed when you do this. Covering the cage with a cloth at night will encourage your Cockatiel to settle down for sleep.

You should provide a bath for your bird, either fixed to the outside of the cage or a shallow bowl placed inside the cage – although some birds may prefer to be sprayed with tepid water instead.

## Types of Cockatiel

Cockatiels come in a vast array of colours and markings. Common types are pied, pearl, and white faces. Colours are usually grey, cinnamon, lutino or albino.

## Feeding

Cockatiels in the wild eat a wide range of seeds, grains, and vegetation. A quality cockatiel mix makes a good basic diet although supplements may also be required such as cuttlefish which acts as a vitamin supplement, environmental enrichment, and also helps grind the beak down. Small pieces of fresh fruit and vegetables may also be given as treats and fresh drinking water should always be available. Certain foods can be harmful to your Cockatiel - avoid giving your pet lettuce, avocado, lemon, potato, or any sweets or drinks designed for human consumption.

## Looking after your Cockatiels

### Exercise & Entertainment:

Cockatiels are intelligent and inquisitive birds that enjoy playing and climbing, so toys are essential to stimulate them mentally and physically. Cockatiels can also be taught to mimic sounds and talk. If they hear the same words repeatedly from the same person they may pick them up and begin mimicking the words or phrases. Cockatiels often make loud repetitive noises – cock birds in particular.

### Handling:

With patience, Cockatiels can become quite tame although it is essential they are trained from an early age, and by one person only. The first step is to get the bird used to being stroked inside its cage – use a stick or perch, not your hands. Start by gently stroking its chest a couple of times a day, then encourage it to jump onto the stick. Next, repeat the whole process through the door of the cage rather than the bars. Finally, repeat again, using your hands this time instead of the stick. This is a gradual process that may take several weeks but usually works in the end.

To pick up your Cockatiel, ensure your palm covers its back and wings while your middle and index finger surround the bird's neck. Be gentle – Cockatiels will bite if they feel stressed. If catching an aviary bird use a padded rim net and never try to catch it in mid flight - always wait until it is perched safely.

### Breeding:

Cockatiels can be mated from about a year old and will produce a clutch of 5-6 eggs in about 19 days. As with all pets, breeding Cockatiels requires much commitment of time and effort. It is recommended that you therefore seek expert advice and do appropriate research before considering keeping a breeding pair and only if you're certain you can find good homes for the babies.

## Tips for a happy healthy Cockatiel

### Community:

Cockatiels are not solitary birds by nature, so will always prefer the company of their own kind. They can be kept in pairs (hens with cocks) although if just keeping a few birds together, either sex should be fine. For larger aviaries it's usually best to keep more hens than cocks – otherwise the cock birds may fight over the hens. You can also mix pairs of Cockatiels with other small parakeets such as budgerigars although if kept in a breeding aviary you shouldn't mix more than 2 species.

### Health:

Cockatiels can catch Scaly Beak, a contagious condition that requires immediate treatment by a vet. Excessive moulting can be caused by temperature fluctuations or stress. As with all birds, if you are worried about any aspect of your Cockatiel's health, seek advice from an Avian veterinarian. For a healthy life, your Cockatiel needs the following:

- A good balanced diet with no sudden changes
- Plenty of toys to keep them amused
- Water bottle and feed bowls cleaned daily
- Their nails clipped several times a year – ask your vet for advice
- A daily bath – essential for their preening activities
- Regular exercise outside their cage