

## Tips for a happy healthy Parrot

### Community:

Parrots are not solitary birds by nature, but are happy kept on their own provided they receive plenty of attention. If you plan to keep several Parrots, they are best kept in pairs (hens with cocks). For larger aviaries it's usually best to keep more hens than cocks – otherwise the cock birds may fight over the hens.

### Health:

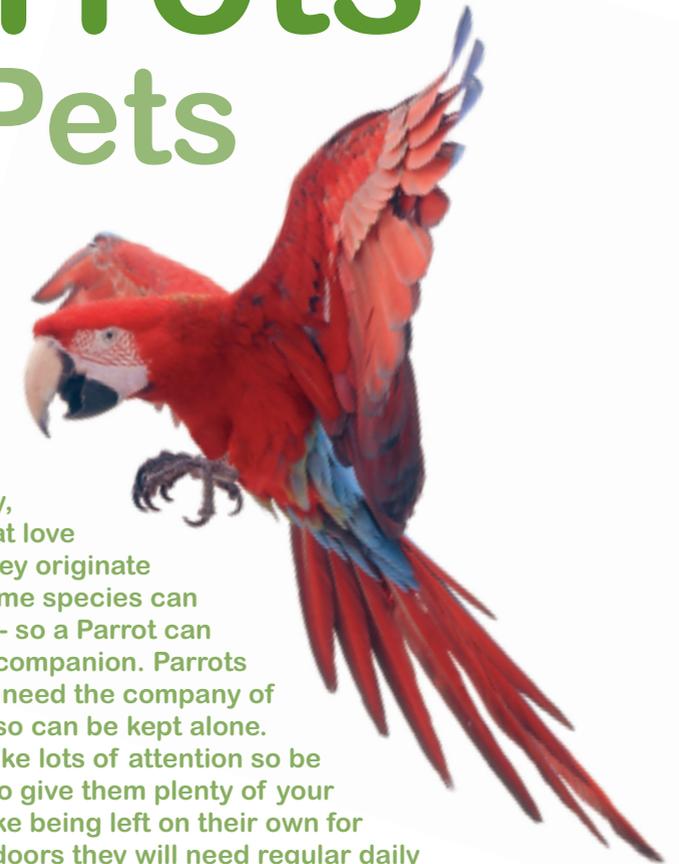
Weigh your Parrot regularly as weight loss is usually the first sign of illness – Parrots are masters at hiding symptoms, often until it's too late. As with all birds, if you are worried about any aspect of your Parrot's health, seek advice from an Avian veterinarian. For a healthy life, your Parrot needs the following:

- Plenty of attention
- A good balanced diet
- Plenty of toys to keep them amused
- Water bottle and feed bowls cleaned daily
- A regular bath – essential for their preening activities
- Daily exercise outside their cage

### 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 Parrots As Pets



### Parrots:

Parrots are friendly, intelligent birds that love human contact. They originate from Africa and some species can live up to 70 years - so a Parrot can become a lifetime companion. Parrots do not necessarily need the company of their own species so can be kept alone. However, they do like lots of attention so be sure you are able to give them plenty of your time – they don't like being left on their own for too long. 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

Parrots can be housed indoors in a large wire cage with a plastic base or outdoors in a purpose-built aviary. Once trained, they can use an open perched stand during the day and only be put in their cage at night. The cage should be positioned away from draughts and direct sunlight and your Parrot should be able to stretch out and flap his wings for exercise, without them touching the sides of the cage. If kept outdoors, your Parrot should have enough room to fly around properly. Parrots kept indoors will need to be let out of their cage daily to exercise under supervision – make sure you keep all doors and windows closed when you do this. Covering the cage with a cloth at night will encourage your Parrot to settle down for sleep.

Parrots need to bathe – it's an essential part of their preening ritual. Some Parrots will prefer a shallow dish of water or bird bath, others prefer to have water sprinkled on them gently while some may even prefer the kitchen sink or shower ! Experiment to see which method your Parrot likes best.

## Types of Parrot

The African Grey Parrot is the best known species, famous for its talking abilities. There are around 30 different species of Amazon Parrots which come in a variety of colours and markings. Some of these will also learn to talk if trained.



## Feeding

Parrots in the wild eat a wide range of seeds, grains, and vegetation. A quality Parrot food mix makes a good basic diet although supplements may also be required. Small pieces of fresh fruit and vegetables can be given as treats and fresh drinking water should always be available. Apples, grapes, and carrots are the usual favourites. Certain foods can be harmful to your Parrot - avoid giving your pet lettuce, avocado, chocolate, or any sweets or drinks designed for human consumption. Parrots will also need a suitable grit/mineral supplement to help digest their food, and cuttlefish bone makes an excellent source of calcium.

## Looking after your Parrots

### Exercise & Entertainment:

Parrots are curious, highly active birds that enjoy climbing. Attaching some horizontal climbing bars to the outside of their cage makes a good exercise area. Toys are essential to stimulate your Parrot mentally and physically and they also enjoy playing with coconut shells, sea shells, or raw vegetables – anything they can chew on. Parrots can be incredibly loud, emitting a truly ear-piercing scream when they want your attention!

## Handling:

Successfully taming your Parrot requires time and patience and works best if done from an early age and by one person only. First let the Parrot settle in their new environment, talk to them gently, and gradually get them used to accepting small treats through the cage bars before moving on to stick training methods. Start by placing the cage on the floor, opening the door, and seeing if your Parrot will venture out. Placing a training stick just in front of the bird's feet should encourage it to jump on. Some Parrots will do this straight away, where others require more patience. As your Parrot gains confidence, advance to hand taming methods, using sunflower seeds or peanuts as rewards. Repetition of basic behaviour is the best way to tame your Parrot.

Most Parrots are too heavy to perch on your finger. Instead, hold your fingers together and offer your whole hand placed horizontal to the bird's feet. Remember Parrots are not domestic animals and never lose their wild characteristics. Taming them is therefore a gradual process and may take several months of patient work.

## Breeding:

As with all pets, breeding Parrots 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.

