



Lovebird

(Genus *Agapornis*)

Adult Size	6 inches	Life Span	10-15 years
Male/Female Differences	Some visual characteristics that may aid in determining sex are that the female is heavier bodied than the male and will sit more broadly with legs apart, while the males sit more upright. A female's tail will appear more square while a males will appear more rounded. When observing the nesting behavior, the female will do most of the nest building work.		
Compatibility	Lovebirds have a deep reproduction and socialization drive. Although lovebirds can be housed solely by providing an abundance of socialization and interaction, it can be hard to meet their needs. If unable to provide such conditions, a second lovebird of the opposite sex is strongly recommended. If attempting to avoid breeding entirely, breeders recommend a second lovebird of the same sex to maintain healthy socialization habits. Different species of birds should never be housed together.		
Origin	Nearly all species of lovebird are native to Africa.		
Climate	Warm and dry.		
Day Cycle	Diurnal (awake during the day).		
Temperature	Ideally, 70 – 80 degrees Fahrenheit.		
Lighting	No special lighting is particularly required; however, lovebirds would benefit significantly from natural sunlight. That being said, it is highly recommended to provide a UVB bulb simulating natural sunlight in order to contribute towards healthy emotional development. Lovebirds should experience a normal day and night cycle.		
Humidity	Ambient humidity is ideal.		
Habitat/Territory	Dry savannah regions.		
Substrate/Bedding	Several types of substrates may be used to line the bottom of the cage for these birds, depending upon the preference of the owner. In some cases, aspen pellet bedding may be used to line the bottom of the cage due to the fact that it is able to hold the droppings and moisture better than other substrates. Other owners prefer to utilize cage paper in order to better monitor the fecal droppings of their birds, which are often used		

as indicators of health.

Hiding Place/Den

Birds are highly intelligent pets that need a maximized amount of stimulation; therefore, it is essential to provide these lovebirds with various high quality toys. These toys should offer the bird a range of benefits such as mirror toys, toys that are able to be shredded, bells, and other similar things. Additionally, lovebirds do not necessarily need a hiding place or den; however, they should be given a comforting toy that allows them to be relaxed.

Cage Type

As with any pet, it is always recommended to go bigger with the size of the cage. For these birds, the cage size may be measured at approximately 18" x 18" with the bars being no greater than ¼" apart. When looking for proper cages, the rule of thumb is to look for a cage that allows about 1.5 times the wingspan of the bird in order to allow the pet to spread out. Nevertheless, the bigger the cage, the better!

Diet

For lovebirds, the best possible diet is often a mixture of high quality lovebird pellets, fresh vegetables, and fresh fruits. They also occasionally enjoy nutritious protein sources, such as eggs, to supplement their diet. Lovebirds adore having vegetables and fruits in their diets so it is essential to provide them with smaller bits of these fresh foods. In fact, some owners opt to create a mixture containing frozen vegetables, such as corn, peas, carrots, and lima beans, a high quality lovebird pellet, and dried fruits in a sealed container so that it is readily accessible. Additionally, these birds also enjoy whole grain cereals mixed with various legumes.

Supplements

If a bird remains on a seed based diet, it is inadvertently lacking proper nutrients, vitamins, and minerals that may be found in a high quality pellet diet. That being said, vitamin supplements are often recommended in order to ensure a well-rounded and nutrition packed diet for your bird. If the bird is on a pelleted diet, no additional supplements should be added. Furthermore, birds should be given some form of a calcium supplement, either through food additives or cuttlebones. Cuttlebones are a must have for all bird keepers. The additional calcium supplement is crucial to having a strong bird frame.

Diet Precautions

Although lovebirds appreciate a high quality diet full of variation, certain foods should be avoided as they are deemed toxic to the bird. Some toxic foods that should be avoided are caffeine, avocados, pitted fruits, coffee, and chocolate. Additionally, high seed diets are nutritionally lacking and may often lead to fatty liver disease. As stated, birds should be given calcium supplementation otherwise fragile bone structures and potential egg impaction may result

Feeding

Fresh food and water should be given daily. Lovebirds enjoy snacking throughout the day so a food cup mounted to the side of the cage should be readily available to them.

Water Source

Fresh water in a water cup mounted to the side of the cage should be readily available to these birds. This cup should be changed daily and be free of debris throughout the day.

Grooming	<p>There are various parts of the bird that should be maintained and groomed on a set schedule, more specifically the beak, nails, and wings. Various rough surfaced items, such as beak conditioners, should be provided in the cage in order to help keep the beak nice and trim. Birds should be brought in regularly, typically about every four to six weeks, to have their wings and nails checked. By keeping the nails and wings appropriately trimmed, the overall health and safety of the bird is being accounted for. Moreover, lovebirds are relatively clean birds that are able to preen themselves; however, it is highly recommended to mist them with a clean spray bottle a couple times a week to keep them happy, bright, and clean.</p>
Oral and Foot Care	<p>As mentioned, these birds should have their nails trimmed every four to six weeks in order to ensure proper nail growth. As a supplement to these routine trims, a variety of special perches should be placed inside of the cage, such as a manicure one. Additionally, various types of perches should be available in the cage to avoid foot atrophy, which is a permanent tightening of the muscles within the foot that may make it difficult to walk. In terms of oral care, various beak conditioners, such as lava blocks and cuttlebones, should be put in the cage to help wear the beak down. In the event that of an overgrown beak, the bird should be brought to a veterinarian for proper filing.</p>
Proper Handling	<p>Lovebirds are highly sociable, loving, and emotional birds that need a significant amount of handling and contact. Because of this need for constant affection, it is highly recommended to have the wings regularly trimmed to keep them from flying away and potentially hurting themselves. These birds are highly intelligent and are able to learn tricks given the proper amount of attention and repetition. Moreover, they are able to step up and be held in the hand due to their small size. If need be, a towel may be initially used to help pick them up until they are accustomed to being held.</p>
Habitat Maintenance	<p>Ideally, the substrate of the cage should be changed out daily with the bottom tray being taken out, emptied, washed, and dried; however, perches, toys, and other additional items inside of the cage should be changed out and disinfected weekly. In addition to the extra items, the base of the cage should also be completely broken down and disinfected once a week.</p>
Health Concerns	<p>Because all birds have a highly sensitive respiratory system, they should be kept away from drafty areas and areas that may suffer from drastic temperature changes. Additionally, highly aromatic things, such as incense and household cleaners, should be kept away from these birds as it can become a highly toxic environment for them. Dirty cages and poor diets are other areas that may be of health concern as it could result into health issues or infections that may be impossible to treat. Moreover, owners should provide their birds with a variety of toys in order to reinforce a healthy and positive emotional health, while also providing different perches to fight against foot atrophy. Seeing that lovebirds are highly social pets, it is essential to handle them as much as possible in order to ensure a full and stable emotional health. Nevertheless, having a specialized avian veterinarian is important to have in case of emergency.</p>
