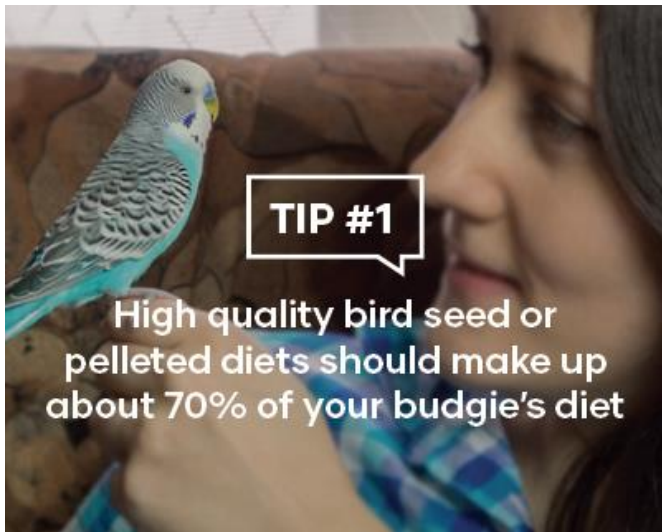


# Budgie Care Guide

Budgies are great little pets; they are easy to care for and can become great talkers and mimics. Like all pets they require daily attention.

## Feeding



High quality bird seed or pelleted diet should make up about 70% of your budgie's intake. The remainder should consist of fresh vegetables, greens and a small amount of fruits. Budgies do tend to be fussy eaters and can become set in their "food ways" later in life. So when you introduce a variety of fruits, vegetables and treats at a young age it makes feeding later in life much easier.

Offer vegetables, leafy greens, or sprouted seeds daily. With some trial-and-error you will find your bird's personal favourites. Fresh greens are an essential part of your bird's diet. Remove any vegetables or greens not eaten within 24 hours. It

also pays to limit the amount of sunflower seeds or millet sprays in their diet as these can become a fast favourite where your budgie may pick these out (and leave the rest). As with all birds, food and water containers should be emptied and cleaned daily.

If you wish to change your bird's diet at any stage make sure that you do this over the course of a few weeks. Sudden dietary changes can cause digestive problems, so keep an eye on your bird's weight, stools and general well-being during this time. Water needs to be fresh, always available and changed daily. Like us, budgies appreciate quality and variety in their food.

### **The following is a collection of fresh food suggestions:**

Fresh food should always be thoroughly rinsed first.

Apples (no pips)	Corn
Apricots	Dark green leafy vegetables
Banana	Oranges
Broccoli	Peaches
Brussel sprouts	Pears (no pips)
Cabbage	Peas
Carrot tops	Popped corn
Cauliflower	Silverbeet
Celery	Cooked egg (occasionally)

DO NOT FEED lettuce, avocado, rhubarb, chocolate, alcohol, fruit seeds or caffeine as these can make your bird very ill. If in doubt, don't feed it!

# Behaviour, Exercise and Taming

Adopting a hand raised budgie is the easiest first step to having a tame pet. Hand raised birds have been fed since a young age by humans, are often well handled and have a better foundation to accept human contact and forming a bond with a new owner. There is no quick fix or fast track when it comes to taming your budgie. It takes patience, consistency and gentleness. When you first get your bird home and settled in its new cage, start slowly by talking gently to your bird, sitting near it and generally including it in your life. Don't put your hand into your budgie's cage to try to get them out as it will most probably result in a bite. Remember that their cage is your bird's sanctuary and it needs to feel safe.

Tempt your bird with a treat held by you at the cage bars. Once it's happy to accept the treat, try opening the cage front door to tempt it out. You can even put some sunflower seeds into the palm of your hand and let it eat from this to encourage them out.

Make sure that before the bird is out of the cage that all curtains are closed, mirrors are covered, doors are shut and other pets are away from the area. Getting your bird's wings clipped can be helpful, particularly during the training phase. Ask your local veterinarian for advice on if this is the right decision for your pet. Always return your budgie back into its cage before it too gets tired. The last experience outside of its cage should always be a positive one.

Once accustomed to you and the environment, your budgie should be exercised daily by letting it out and socialising with your family. Allowing your bird to fly every day will keep your bird happier, healthier and fit. If your bird has their wings clipped it is important to offer them plenty of climbing and other enrichment tools, and ensure they have a safe space to exercise. Cages should not be a full time environment for your pet.

Birds respond well to a consistent and stable routine and plenty of repetition so they can feel safe and secure at home. When trying to teach your bird to talk, it is important to use the same phrase, in a similar tone of voice and repeat often. Pairing a verbal cue with a physical cue helps reinforce the learning (i.e. saying 'good morning' every morning when you take their night cover off). Budgies are very personable and chatty and will make a variety of chirps, squawks and chatters as part of their daily noise. Many budgies boss their toys around and are incredibly comical.

Budgies often love companionship and can do well in pairs or groups. A lone budgie will require additional attention from their human family members to get this important social interaction.

## Moulting

Moulting can be an uncomfortable and stressful time for your bird. You may see plastic looking 'pin feathers' where there is a sheath over the new feather. Sometimes these can get quite irritating for your bird and you may see them rubbing their head to help loosen the new feather. Old feathers around the tails and wings may drop at this time, leaving your bird looking quite 'straggly'. Offering tepid sprays with water, and a bath, may help to encourage grooming behaviours. You can also offer a vitamin supplement and additional protein (e.g. conditioning food) to help your budgie through this period. Young birds will often have their first moult around 6-12 months of age, and then with each change of season.

This process takes between four to eight weeks and during this time your bird will be more susceptible to changes of temperature so make sure that its environmental temperature is stable. Your bird will need more protein during this time and this can be delivered by a soft egg-based supplement or conditioning food.

A vitamin supplement during this phase is also recommended. Growing new feathers takes a lot out of a budgie.

# Grooming and Health



Budgies come from a dry environment, and are often considered quite 'dusty' with dander that can shake off when they fluff and groom themselves. Encouraging bathing helps waterproof the feathers, further encouraging grooming and general feather health. Not all birds will naturally bathe in a bird bath or bowl however you can teach them from a younger age. Over the warmer months, baths should be offered daily. Alternatively many birds will appreciate a light misting using fresh water in a spray bottle. This can embolden your budgie to display bathing behaviours and gain confidence near their bird bath.

Always ensure baths/sprays are given on warmer dry days, and your bird is able to fully groom and dry off so they don't catch a chill. Bathing/spritzing is especially helpful over moulting periods to help promote new feather growth, and loosen any dry pin feathers.

Nails should be trimmed by a qualified professional. You should worm your indoor bird every six months or every three months for your outdoor aviary birds.

## **The signs of a healthy budgie are:**

- Active, alert and sociable
- Dry nostrils and bright eyes
- Beak, legs and feet should look normal
- Eats and drinks regularly
- Has smooth, well-groomed feathers

## **The signs of an unhealthy budgie are:**

- Sitting on the floor of the cage or low on the perch
- Wheezing or coughing
- Eye or nasal discharge
- Fluffed, plucked or dirty feathers
- Diarrhoea or discoloured stools
- Red or swollen eyes
- Favouring one foot
- White scales around the eyes, beak, legs or feet
- Appetite loss
- Holding wings low and drooped

If you notice any of these signs please contact your [veterinarian](#) immediately.

# Housing



It is best to provide the largest habitat that you can afford. A recommended size for one budgie is 45cm (W) x 45cm (D) x 60cm (H). This is suitable as a basic house cage, keeping in mind your bird will need ample time out of the cage as well. If you are keeping multiple budgies it's important that they have plenty of space to spread out, and additional food and water bowls will be needed. Bigger cages are always better and have more room for your pet to exhibit natural behaviours. If your budgie is not hand raised and will be kept in an aviary or spend the majority of their time in the cage, it's important to be even more considerate of the size of their housing and allow for plenty of perches, levels, branches, and toys.

The bars on the cage should be no wider than 1.5cm apart, and have a mix of horizontal bars to help with climbing. Wider bars should be monitored to ensure your bird cannot poke their head out through the bars.

Perches need to be a variety of textures, widths and lengths. This variety will exercise your bird's feet and aid in the prevention of arthritis. It also more closely simulates life in the outdoors.

A metal grate over the bottom of the cage may help to keep your bird away from its droppings, although it can be a better idea to remove these if the cage style permits for natural foraging behaviours. Many birds like to pick through their floor, play and explore and this is much more fun without the bars.

## Cage Placement

Keep your bird in the part of the house that is social so your bird can be an active member of the family. Keep it out of drafts and off the floor.

Cover your bird's cage at night to prevent "night fright". Budgies need about 12 hours of rest a night. This also helps your pet get used to a regular routine, and you may find your bird starts to ask for their cover when it is bed time.

## Cage Tips

- Don't place food or water containers underneath the perches – this will prevent possible contamination.
- Remove husks of seeds that collect on the top of bowls.
- Avoid cooking near your bird with non-stick cookware as these can release harmful fumes.
- Clean the cage and perches regularly.
- Replace food and water daily.
- Remove uneaten vegetables after 24 hours.
- Replace perches, dishes and toys once worn or damaged.
- Rotate toys regularly.

- Add in bird safe branches to encourage foraging and play.
- Make sure there are no parts or toys in your bird's cage that are lead, lead-base painted, zinc or galvanised metal.

### **Recommended Supplies:**

Good sized cage	Cage cover
Pelleted food or seed	Variety of perches
Variety of toys including chew toys and brain games/puzzle toys	Treats
Grit	Food and water dishes
Millet Spray	Cage liners
Bird bath and/or spray bottle	Vitamin supplement
Cuttlefish or mineral block	Emergency kit

### **Is a budgie right for you and your family?**

- I have the appropriate location and housing for this pet.
- I will provide a safe and enriching environment for this pet.
- I realise that owning this bird will be a long term commitment (up to 10 years).
- I can provide daily supervised time outside of the cage for my budgie(s).
- I can financially provide for all care requirements and any veterinary attention needed.
- I am aware that birds can be vocal and this is acceptable for my family and my neighbours.
- An adult can provide primary care for this pet.

**Average size:** 17cm (including tail)

**Life span:** 10 years on average