

Zebra Finches

Finches are wonderful birds for anyone looking to just enjoy watching their pets and listening to their soft and sweet voices. Zebra finches, like other finches, are very hardy little birds and active during the day. They are also very easy and fun to breed, and there is nothing as amazing as seeing an egg in the nest or hearing the peeping from a baby for the first time!

General Diet:

Many finches are basically seed eaters in the wild so can be fed a diet in captivity that mainly consists of many types of seeds as found in Finch Seed mixes. Pelleted diets are available as well and are highly recommended.

Vitamins/Supplements:

Birds need a vitamin/mineral supplement added to their food everyday.

Treats/Extra Foods:

Finches do well if given some soft vegetables and fruit along with their regular diet. These can include cooked corn and peas, dark lettuces (no iceberg), peeled apples, even a little orange once in a while. Basically anything soft and good for you is good for them (just avoid avocado, asparagus, and anything sugary, salty, or greasy). Seed treats such as millet and treat sticks are great for finches! Not only do they give extra nutrition but can keep a bird busy for hours!

Housing:

Finches need a cage in which they can flap their wings and make short flights easily, so the bigger the cage the better for the bird. Finches should be kept in cages that have bars no more than 3/8ths of an inch wide. Luckily, there are many colors and styles to choose from. One feed cup and one water cup are basics with the cage along with perches and a tray on the bottom. Cage paper or bird litters are best to use in the tray. Never use colored newspaper, wood shavings, or corncob bedding.

General Care:

Every day scrub out the water dish with a light dishwashing detergent and rinse well. Birds eat their seed mix from the top, so take off the top layer of seed every day that has been eaten, and then add more new seed and mix thoroughly. Change seed completely every 2-3 days. The tray should be cleaned at least once a week or more often depending on cage size and the number of birds in the cage. Perches should also be cleaned off (washed if plastic, scraped if wooden) once a week or as needed. At least once a month, clean out the cage completely by washing the bars, base, tray, and all toys and accessories made of plastic or metal thoroughly.

General Maintenance:

Most finches rarely need their beak trimmed, but owners should keep an eye on the bill just in case. The bill is usually kept trimmed by the bird chewing on a beak conditioner and cuttlebone. Nails can grow quickly on finches, and may need to be trimmed when they get too long. Birds can be offered special perches made out of a material that can help keep the nails short. It is also recommended to offer your bird perches of varying diameters to exercise their feet. For bathing, lightly mist your pet with a plant mister, or offer a birdbath, at least three times a week. Only mist or offer a bath to your pet in the morning.

Health Care:

Finches are generally very hardy and healthy birds and can live up to 6-8 years. They do not need any type of vaccines but should be checked by a veterinarian right away if they show any signs of illness such as lethargy, discharge from their nose or eyes, raspy breathing, a change in their feces or lack of appetite. Watch their bill and feet for any abnormal growths as well. Their cage should be kept in an area that is free from all drafts. Place the cage away from any vents, windows, or doors.

Special Section - Breeding:

Many types of finches can be bred in captivity, and some are very easy to breed. Most only need to be supplied with a covered nest usually made from wicker and some nesting material supplied by a pet store. It can be a very rewarding experience for both children and adults to breed finches. We have some excellent books on finches that give more information on breeding.

Supplies checklist:

Perches of at least three different diameters	Wire cage
Vitamin/mineral supplement	Food dish
Toys, especially ones with straw or rope to chew	Water dish
Beak conditioner	Treat dish
Cuttlebone	Cage paper or bird litter

This information is brought to you by the Pet Professionals at:

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