

Cockatiels

Cockatiels are very sweet, loving birds that make great pets for anyone. They are quiet (although some may learn to whistle quite loudly) and many love to cuddle and have their head scratched and in return will preen your hair and clothes! They can be kept in places where larger pets are not allowed, like apartments and condos, and they are very healthy and intelligent pets who will recognize and want to be with their owner when they are home.

General Diet:

Cockatiels 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 Cockatiel Seed Mixes. Pelleted diets are available as well and are highly recommended.

Vitamins/Supplements:

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

Treats/Extra Foods:

Cockatiels do well if given some vegetables and fruit along with their regular diet. These can include cooked or raw corn, peas, carrots, dark lettuces (no iceberg), beans, apples, raisins, and even some cooked pasta. Basically anything good for you is good for them (just avoid avocado, asparagus, and anything sugary, salty, or greasy). Seed treats such as millet and treat stix are great for Cockatiels! Not only do they give extra nutrition but can keep a bird busy for hours!

Housing:

Cockatiels like a cage where they can flap their wings in easily, and the bigger the cage the better for the bird. Cockatiels should be kept in cages that have bars no more than half an inch wide. Luckily, there are many colors and styles to choose from and can be matched to the area that it will be placed. 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 litter are best to use in the tray, and never use colored newspaper, cedar shavings, or corn cob bedding.

Sanitation/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 cockatiels rarely need nail or beak trims, but owners should keep an eye on these just in case. Birds can also be offered special perches made out of a material that can help keep the nails short, and the bill is usually kept trimmed by the bird chewing on the beak conditioner and cuttlebone. Wings need to be trimmed every 4-6 months or the bird will be able to fly. For bathing, lightly mist your pet with a plant mister, or offer a bird bath, at least three times a week. Only mist or offer a bath to your pet in the morning.

Health Care:

Cockatiels are generally very hardy and healthy birds and can live up to 10-15 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, discharges, a change in their feces, or lack of appetite. 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 - Taming:

Young cockatiels are very sweet and should always be handled quietly and gently at first when taming. Young birds that are being tamed should have their wings trimmed (which is just like having your hair cut, it does not hurt at all). Then it is best to work with them in a small, quiet area. Keep them close to the floor, as they will try to fly. When the bird is on the floor, push a finger slowly and gently against its lower chest. Once the bird is on, raise the hand and quietly talk to the bird. It may fly off a few times but be patient.

Supplies checklist:

Perches of at least three different diameters	Wire cage
Vitamin/mineral supplement	Food dish
Cage paper or bird litter	Water dish
Toys, especially a mirror if the bird is kept alone	Treat dish
Beak conditioner	Cuttlebone
Books	

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

**The Pet Advantage
350 Dorset St.
So. Burlington, Vermont
802-860-1714**