

## **BIRDS**

### **INTRODUCTION – THE FIRST TIME BUYER**

**WHAT TYPE OF BIRD IS RIGHT FOR YOU?** If keeping a bird interests you, you are not alone. Humans from all levels of society have been keeping birds for thousands of years, from common folks to kings (Henry VIII) to famous explorers (Christopher Columbus) to presidents (Theodore Roosevelt).

There is a wide variety of birds available as pets. Do you want a small singer who will fill your house with beautiful chirping? Or do you prefer a large parrot who will talk back to you? There is literally something for everyone.

But before you bring home your new winged friend, there are a few things you must know. Your bird will depend on you for everything—food, protection, health care, and enrichment. This involves researching the type of bird you want and what he requires before purchase. Doing so will prepare you to properly keep him before you bring him home, as opposed to you scrambling around and guessing what to buy on the day you are bringing him home, or worse, searching frantically for a local avian veterinarian in the event of a health concern.

### **WHAT IS AVAILABLE?**

There are many types of birds available, and some are better suited for first-time bird keepers than others. Parakeets, cockatiels, canaries, and some species of finches are all great choices. However, most canaries and finches aren't as inclined to leave their cage for playtime or cuddles as many parrots are. Some parrots, like African greys and Amazons, can grow in excess of 13 inches (33 cm) and therefore may be too large for some people to care for. Always research the bird that interests you so that you know what to expect.

You can obtain your bird from a pet store or a local breeder. Many young birds will be available, or you may be able to adopt an older bird. Do your best to determine why the animal is being offered for adoption—sometimes people simply pass along a bird with behavioural or physical problems. For an experienced keeper, these may be easy to correct or treat, but a first-time bird owner may not be able to handle such a situation effectively.

Though there different kinds or birds available as pets, our main discussion will be focused on the **Parrot**.

Different species of parrots have different life spans, so depending on the type of parrot you own, a healthy bird may live anywhere from 10 to 50 years or longer. Without proper health care, however, a bird's life can be cut short by easily preventable illnesses. By finding an experienced vet, taking your parrot in for regular checkups, and learning to recognize the signs of potential illness, you can make your bird much more likely to live a happy, healthy, and long life.

## **HANDLING AND INTERACTION**

The most important thing to remember when interacting with and handling your bird is that you must work hard to earn his trust, and then you must never do anything to betray that trust. Birds have long memories, so act in a trustworthy manner around your pet at all times. Although he doesn't operate in a vindictive or vengeful way, your bird will remember both good and bad things that are done to him, and he will be less likely to trust you completely if something bad happens to him.

## **THE VET'S OFFICE**

Within three days of acquiring your parrot, you should take him to an avian veterinarian. An avian veterinarian specializes in the care and treatment of birds—a vet who doesn't specialize in birds may not catch a subtle symptom of illness or may not perform all the proper tests when examining him.