



Budgies

AAV Companion Bird Care Series

Budgerigars (“budgies”) are small, colorful parrots that are found in large numbers in the desert interiors of Australia. The normal free-ranging budgie is green; other colors have resulted from selective breeding, which in some cases has actually produced undesirable characteristics. Selective breeding may also have resulted in genetic predisposition to tumors and other diseases. Surprisingly, some of these small birds are among the best talkers of all the parrot species.

Vital Statistics

Total length: 7 inches (18 cm)

Body weight: 30 g

Age of sexual maturity: 4 months

Maximum life span: 18 years

What to Expect from Your Budgie

Budgerigars (commonly referred to as “parakeets” or “budgies”) are quiet, intelligent, non-destructive birds that are easy to care for. They are the most popular and numerous of companion birds because of their relatively gentle, gregarious, and entertaining personalities. They do not usually bond with one individual person and frequently interact with all family members. Budgerigars are capable of developing a large vocabulary (perhaps 200-300 words), but some effort must be made to accomplish this, and their voice is not as clear as other pet bird species. Some individuals are also good at whistling.

Is Your Budgie a Male or a Female?

Generally, in the normal green budgie, the cere (plump tissue above the beak) is blue in the male and pinkish brown in the female. This gender differentiation is not 100% accurate, nor does it apply to color mutations. Hormonal changes may also affect the color of the cere.

What Should You Feed Your Budgie?

Most avian veterinarians recommend a high quality, toxin-free, formulated diet, preferably certified organic when possible. Supplementation may include chopped organic vegetables, fruit, and whole grains. While many budgies can apparently live for many years on primarily seed-based diets, most veterinarians believe disease incidence is reduced with a balanced, formulated diet.

What Do Budgies Do All Day?

Budgies are playful and enjoy toys and the company of other budgies. While they can be kept as single pets, single budgies benefit from attention from their human flock members. Because they love to chew, toys must be free of toxic metals, hooks and sharp objects, or easily consumed components. Small-diameter, fresh-cut branches from nontoxic, pesticide-free trees can be provided.

Are Budgies Tame?

Budgies are easy to tame. The more time you spend with your budgie, the tamer it will become. Young, hand-raised budgies adapt readily to new surroundings and handling procedures. Young budgies may be identified by their large black eyes, pink cere and stripes over the forehead. They should be exposed to novel situations (car travel, hospital visits, multiple household visitors, other pets) early in life so they are well adjusted to these events. Gently handled and well socialized budgies usually make outstanding pets.

Common Disorders of Budgerigars

- Neoplasia (cancer of gonads, kidneys, other organs)
- Liver disease
- Reproductive disease (egg-binding, yolk emboli)
- Obesity
- Feather disorders
- Parasitic disease (scaly face mites, intestinal parasites)
- Bacterial or viral infections, including chlamydiosis
- Circovirus
- Injuries due to handling by small children, attacks from other pets or collisions

Many diseases can be prevented with regular veterinary care, proper diet and housing. For these reasons, it is important to develop a relationship with a veterinarian who is experienced in avian preventive care, medicine and surgery.

For help in finding an avian veterinarian in your area, contact the Association of Avian Veterinarians (AAV) by visiting www.AAV.org and click on “Find-a-Vet.”

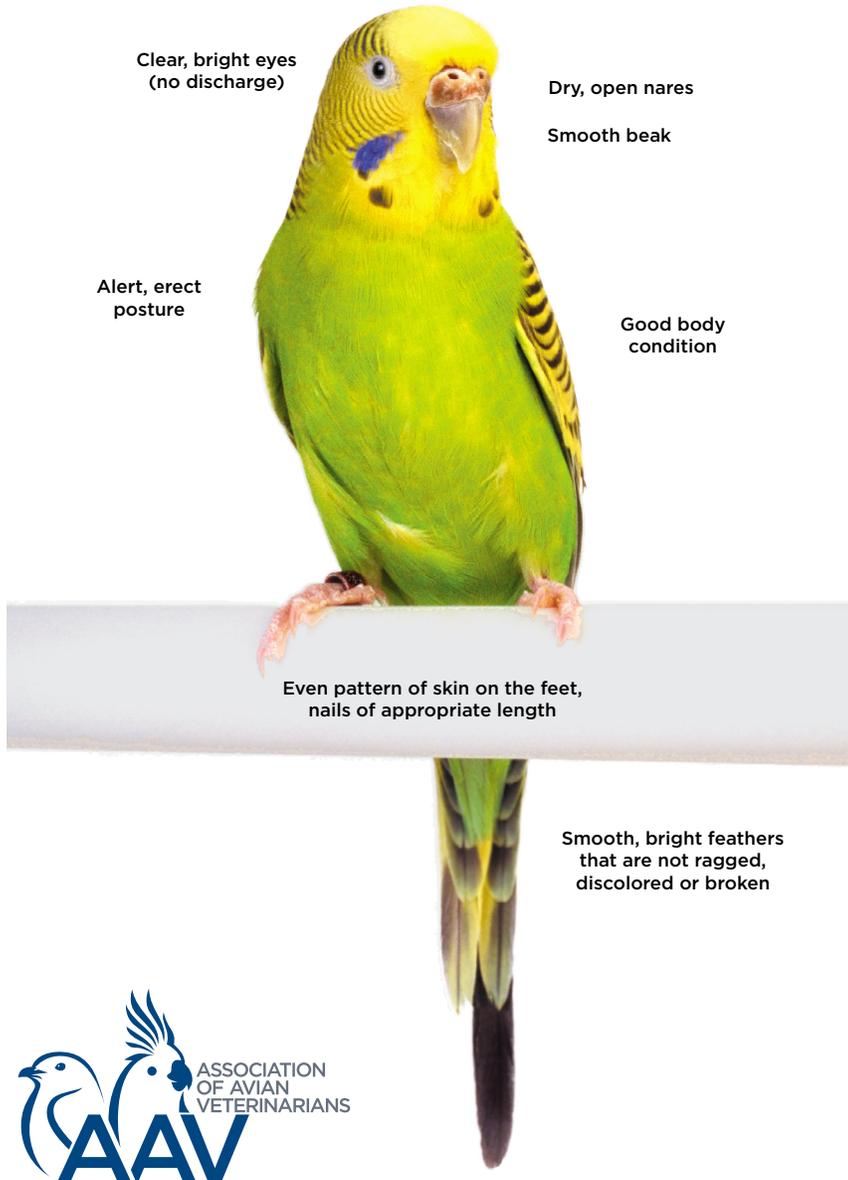
How to Identify Your Bird

Budgies occasionally escape outdoors, and permanent identification may help to return birds to their owners. One method used to permanently identify your budgie is implantation of a microchip, as is performed in other pets. Some birds already have leg bands for identification. Although closed leg bands seldom cause injury, some owners prefer to have them removed.

Should the Wings Be Clipped?

The decision to clip wings or allow free flight should be made carefully. Birds allowed free flight benefit from exercise and mental stimulation; however, free flying birds may be injured by hitting windows or ceiling fans or hurt by encountering toxic materials. With careful planning and training, some birds may be allowed free flight in a safe area. The goal of clipping the wings is not to make the bird incapable of flight, but to prevent it from developing rapid and sustained flight and to prevent escape. Clipping must be done carefully and tailored to each individual to prevent flight and injuries from falling.

What Your Veterinarian Looks for in a Healthy Budgie



How to Keep Your Budgie Healthy, Happy and Safe!

- Take your budgie to your veterinarian immediately after purchase, then at least once every 6-12 months for examinations.
- Provide stimulating environmental enrichment by offering toys, social interaction, and foraging opportunities.
- Feed a fresh, high quality, toxin-free, formulated diet with fresh chopped fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Provide clean, fresh, uncontaminated drinking water and change frequently. Budgies can be trained to use a water bottle.
- Although budgies are not usually enthusiastic bathers, provide occasional opportunities for bath, shower, or misting with fresh water.
- Avoid spraying house with insecticides.

Housing for Your Budgie Should:

- Be as large as possible.
- Recommended bar spacing: 1/2 inch to 5/8 inch.
- Be clean, secure, and safe.
- Be constructed of nontoxic materials (some cages may contain toxic metals, such as zinc).
- Contain variably sized perches made of clean, nontoxic, pesticide-free wood or branches.
- Have easy-to-clean food and water containers.
- Have perches not placed directly over food or water bowls.
- Be offered opportunities for protected outdoor exposure to fresh air, direct sunlight, and exercise.

Essential Safety Tips

Budgies are very curious and will investigate anything new in their environment. That is why it is important to prevent their access to:

- Ceiling fans
- Stove tops with hot burners, pans, or skillets
- Fumes from overheated non-stick cookware
- Sandpaper-covered perches
- Tobacco and cigarette smoke
- Chocolate, avocado, salt, alcohol
- Toxic houseplants
- Pesticides or chemical cleaners
- Easily dismantled toys
- Dogs, cats, and unsupervised children
- Sources of heavy metals, such as lead or zinc (stained glass windows, pewter, some mini blinds, or linoleum)
- Plug-in air fresheners
- Scented candles



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