



# Conures

## AAV Companion Bird Care Series

The group of birds known as conures consists of several separate genera. They are small to medium-sized parrots with long tails and proportionately broad, heavy beaks. They have a body shape similar to macaws. Free-ranging conures are found from Mexico to Central and South America. Most conure species are very sociable and live together in small groups, spending time grooming each other. Some species are considered nomadic. Most have a loud, raucous call that can be heard for some distance in the forest. Conures are generally hardy and popular aviculture and as pet birds, bringing to captivity their sociable nature and loud voice. The most commonly seen species are primarily of the *Aratinga* genus. Larger conure species, such as Patagonian and golden (Queen of Bavaria) conures, are relatively rare in captivity.

## Vital Statistics

**Total length:** 9-12 inches (23-31 cm)  
**Body weight (most):** 80-200 g  
**Age of sexual maturity:** 1-3 years  
**Maximum life span:** 35 years

## Common Disorders of Conures

- Behavioral problems (screaming, biting)
- Bacterial and fungal infection
- Injuries and toxin exposure
- Reproductive-related disease
- Viral infections, such as polyomavirus, avian bornavirus infection, and herpesvirus

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](http://www.AAV.org) and click on "Find-a-Vet."

## What to Expect from Your Conure

Conures are usually gregarious, playful, animated birds that enjoy and seek out attention. Conures are not usually timid. Like all birds, time outside of the cage should be carefully supervised. These birds can occasionally learn a few words, but are not known for their talking ability. Their noise level during vocalizations can be very loud and sometimes irritating. The less common dusky-headed and green-cheeked conures are somewhat quieter than the more familiar jenday, sun, mitred, or half-moon conures.

## Is Your Conure a Male or a Female?

It is difficult to reliably distinguish a male from a female conure based on physical characteristics; therefore, DNA sexing, followed by endoscopy may be used for sex determination.

## What Should You Feed Your Conure?

For a long, healthy life, conures should be fed a high quality, toxin-free, formulated diet, preferably certified organic. Supplementation may include chopped organic vegetables, fruit, and whole grains. The addition of very limited amounts of seeds and nuts may be beneficial.

## What Do Conures Do All Day?

Conures are adventurous. Toys must be sturdy and free of toxic metals, hooks, sharp objects, and easily consumed components. They should be rotated frequently to prevent boredom. Large diameter fresh-cut branches from nontoxic, pesticide-free trees should be available. Check with your veterinarian for recommendations on locally available safe trees.

## Are Conures Tame?

Young, hand-raised conures adapt readily to new surroundings and handling procedures. They should be exposed early in life to novel situations (car travel, hospital visits, playing “peek-a-boo” with a towel, multiple visitors in the household, other household pets) so that they are well-adjusted to these events. The best way to encourage desirable behaviors is with patience and by offering positive reinforcement, often in the form of food rewards.

## How to Identify Your Bird

Conures occasionally escape outdoors, and permanent identification may help to return birds to their owners. One method used to permanently identify your bird 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 Conure



## How to Keep Your Conure Healthy, Happy and Safe!

- Take your conure 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. Conures can be trained to use a water bottle.
- Many birds enjoy bathing. Try providing a warm water bath, or gently spraying with clean warm water daily if possible.
- Avoid spraying house with insecticides.

## Housing for Your Conure Should:

- Be as large as possible.
- 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

Conures 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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Visit the Bird Owners Resource page at:  
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