



Quakers

AAV Companion Bird Care Series

Quaker parakeets (*Myiopsitta monachus*), also known as monk parakeets, are native to Bolivia, Brazil, and Argentina, but feral flocks have been established in Puerto Rico, the United States, and some major cities in Europe.

Quaker parakeets are highly gregarious and associate in flocks of ten to one hundred or more. Their nests, which are the roosting quarters and center of the birds' daily activity, are enormous communal structures made from thorny twigs and placed in the topmost branches of trees. Each pair has its own chamber or compartment with a separate entrance tunnel. Nests containing up to twenty compartments have been recorded.

Free-ranging quakers have raucous sounds: a loud staccato in flight and a high-pitched chattering when feeding. Because of the potential danger to agricultural interests from feral birds in the United States, it is illegal to keep Quakers in some states.

Vital Statistics

Body length: 11 inches (28 cm)

Body weight: 127-140 g

Age of sexual maturity: 1-2 years

Average life span: 25-30 years

Common Disorders of Quaker Parakeets

- Feather destructive behavior
- Bacterial diseases, including chlamydiosis
- Viral and fungal diseases
- Reproductive disease, especially in females
- Obesity

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."

What to Expect from Your Quaker Parakeet

Quaker parakeets are medium-sized parrots with long, graduated tails. They are intelligent, hardy, and generally friendly with strangers. Quakers are considered to be one of the better talkers, with extraordinary ability to mimic and speak with cognition. Similar to other parrots, the behavioral characteristics of Quaker parakeets can run the gamut from aggressive, biting, noisy and obnoxious, to charming and comical.

Is Your Quaker Parakeet a Male or a Female?

There are no obvious physical characteristics to identify your quaker parakeet as a male or a female; therefore, DNA sexing, followed by endoscopy may be used for sex determination.

What Should You Feed Your Quaker Parakeet?

For a long, healthy life, Quakers should be fed a high quality, toxin-free, formulated diet, preferably certified organic. Supplementation may include chopped organic vegetables, fruit, and whole grains.

What Do Quaker Parakeets Do All Day?

Because of their high intelligence, Quakers require a stimulating and enriching environment. Toys should be rotated frequently and include puzzle-types and toys designed to be shredded or destroyed. Toys should be "bird safe" and free of toxic metals, hooks, sharp objects, or easily consumed components. They can be taught to enjoy foraging, where food and treats are hidden in puzzle toys or other objects, such as paper cups or folded paper packets. This is an excellent way to prevent boredom. Socialized Quakers benefit from inclusion in a busy family's activities in a variety of situations.

Are Quaker Parakeets Tame?

Young, hand-tamed Quakers adapt readily to new surroundings and handling procedures. They should be exposed early in life to novel situations (car travel, hospital visits, multiple visitors in the household, other household pets) so that they are well-adjusted to these events. Non-socialized adult birds are less inclined to accept environmental changes.

How to Identify Your Bird

Quakers 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 Quaker Parakeet



How to Keep Your Quaker Healthy, Happy, and Safe!

- Take your Quaker 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. Quaker parakeets 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 Quaker Parakeet 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

Quaker parakeets 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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