

PREVENTATIVE HEALTHCARE

Common health problems in parakeets include:

- **Psittacosis (parrot fever).** Symptoms of this bacterial infection include green/watery droppings, general lethargy and difficulty breathing. See a vet immediately. This infection may require antibiotics.
- **Mites.** Signs include a buildup of scaly skin or white deposits on the beak, legs and feet. See a vet. Mites can lead to deformities if left untreated.
- **Psittacine beak and feather disease (PBFD).** Symptoms include abnormal feather development, feather loss, dander or unusual growths. See a vet. Treatment may include pain management.
- **Polyomavirus.** Symptoms include appetite loss, an enlarged abdomen, paralysis and diarrhea. See a vet immediately. This infection can be fatal.

Veterinary examinations and routine bloodwork every 6–12 months is recommended, as well as a routine check-up after adopting your parakeet.

Visit a vet immediately if your parakeet has any of the following symptoms: reduced appetite, diarrhea, no feces, lethargy, difficulty urinating, feather-picking, chronic egg laying, self-inflicted wounds or feather loss.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more comprehensive information on parakeet care, visit:

- thesprucepets.com
- petmd.com
- aav.org
- seavs.com

Area Vets

[Stahl Exotic Animal Veterinary Services](#)
4015 Rust Rd.
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 491-1111

[Pender Veterinary Clinic](#)
4001 Legato Rd.
Fairfax, VA 22033
(703) 654-3100

[Paws, Puns & Exotics](#)
5838-A North Kings Highway
Alexandria, VA 22303
(703) 549-7297

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Animal Welfare League of Arlington

2650 Arlington Mill Dr.
Arlington, VA 22206

Phone: 703-931-9241
www.awla.org
mail@awla.org

CARING FOR PARAKEETS

A BASIC GUIDE TO HUSBANDRY AND PREVENTATIVE HEALTHCARE





DIET

Food

- A commercial parrot pellet, such as **Harrison's, Roudybush, LaFaebbers, Scenic, Exact, or ZuPreem**, should comprise 75% of the diet.
- Leafy greens (e.g. collards, kale, spinach), orange vegetables (peppers, sweet potatoes, carrots) protein (hard-boiled egg, tofu, cooked chicken) and some fruit (apples without seeds, bananas, oranges) should comprise 25% of the diet.

Do not feed parakeets grapes, apple seeds, avocado, dairy products, chocolate or caffeine. Avoid feeding seeds and nuts, as these are high in fat.

Water

- A water bottle or dish should be available at all times. Change water daily.

HOUSING AND GENERAL CARE

Caging

- Parakeet cages should provide a minimum of 20 x 12 x 18 inches of space per parakeet with less than ½ inch of space between bars. Horizontal cage bars are optimal.
- Cages should be lined with newspaper or paper towels.

Replace cage liners daily. Thoroughly clean the cage and its components at least once a week.

Environment

Parakeet cages should contain:

- Perches of varying size. Wooden perches are preferable. Avoid sandpaper or concrete perches.
- Toys, homemade or commercially available, to encourage mental stimulation. Rotate weekly to prevent boredom.
- Safe materials, such as non-toxic cardboard, untreated wood or commercially available chew toys, to encourage natural chewing behavior and prevent dental disease.
- Unlimited access to water in a dish or bottle and food in a bowl. Refill daily.

The optimal temperature for parakeet housing is 65–80°F.

Grooming

- Nails should be trimmed regularly, either at home or by a veterinary technician. A trim may be necessary if nails are excessively long or perching behavior is unusual.
- Parakeets should bathe in fresh water (in a bowl, shower or under a faucet) **at least twice weekly**.

BEHAVIOR

- Parakeets require a minimum of **three hours a day outside of the cage**. Make sure to supervise your parakeet and “parakeet-proof” areas of your house before letting a parakeet explore them.
- Parakeets gradually lose their feathers when **molting**, which occurs naturally once or twice a year.
- Parakeets chewing feathers could be a sign of boredom or skin disease.
- Parakeets communicate through a variety of vocalizations: whistling, “talking” and grinding their beaks when happy and screaming when in distress.

Handling

- Pick up your parakeet by letting it step onto your hand. In an emergency, wrap a towel around your parakeet and grip it around the neck. **Never** squeeze a parakeet or constrict the chest.
- Do not allow small children to handle parakeets without adult supervision.

