

# Birds

A guide for pet owners  
from Nationwide® pet insurance



## Congratulations on your new bird

Whether this is your first bird or you're a seasoned aviculturist, make sure you know the basics of keeping your new feathered friend happy and healthy.

### Your home environment

Ensure your home is avian-amenable.

#### Engagement

- Provide varying forms of entertainment—birds are intelligent creatures who need enrichment
- Keep your bird's cage in a high-activity area of your home for stimulation, but at the end of the day, move the cage somewhere dark and quiet to allow for 10–12 hours of sleep

#### Safety for free-roaming birds

- Always supervise your bird outside the cage
- Be mindful of ceiling fans, fly strips, windows, other pets and other potential dangers
- Consider having your veterinarian keep your bird's wings trimmed

#### Toxins

- Keep toxic foods away from your bird, including avocados, fruit pits, onions and garlic
- Be cautious if using non-stick cookware; at higher temperatures, it can produce fumes fatal to birds
- Don't smoke or use aerosols near your bird
- Ensure toys, perches and other materials in the cage are lead-free
- Lead is toxic to birds and is found in many items around

your home; supervise your bird when they are out of cage to prevent chewing on anything not made for birds to chew on

- Reduce the risk of zinc poisoning—avoid galvanized metals such as toys, nuts and bolts, cage clips, etc.

### Your bird's new home

Set up your bird's cage to promote maximum well-being.

#### Choosing a cage

- Look for cages made of non-toxic materials such as non-galvanized stainless steel
- Ensure there are plenty of perches to encourage movement and activity
- Avoid sandpaper perches, which may injure your bird's feet
- Check to make sure the cage is wide enough for your bird to stretch his or her wings
- Talk to your veterinarian about specific needs for the species of bird you own
- Ask your veterinarian about the best way to clean your bird's cage, as fumes from many cleaning products can be harmful



## Substrate

- Use a paper substrate or lining such as newspaper or paper towels; these materials make it easier to spot health issues with the droppings than you'd be able to with wood chips or crushed corn cob
- Place the substrate underneath the lower bars of the cage so your bird can't reach it and be exposed to harmful bacteria
- Regularly clean the cage and provide fresh substrate to minimize exposure to harmful germs, bacteria and fungi

## Bowls

- Position food and water bowls away from perches so they aren't contaminated by droppings
- Use wide bowls to help encourage eating a variety of foods
- Consider separating the food and water bowls to encourage movement and exercise
- Clean bowls and change food and water daily

## General care and health

From food to hygiene, make sure you've got the basics down.

### Food

Diet will depend on the kind of bird you have; some eat a variety of formulated pellets, seeds, vegetables and fruits as treats, while others need a nectar-based diet. Talk with your veterinarian about the best diet to keep your bird healthy.

### Bathing

Try offering a larger water dish, as many birds enjoy bathing to keep clean. Or, consider using a spray bottle with clean water to mist your bird.

### Nails

Keep your bird's nails trimmed if they become too uncomfortable and sharp. Trimming a bird's nails too short can cause injury and bleeding, so have your veterinarian perform this procedure or show you how to do it safely.

### Illness

Signs your bird may be sick include lethargy (decreased activity), a decrease in vocalization, puffed-up feathers and a decrease in appetite. Changes in the amount or color of droppings, stained feathers, baldness, crusting around the nostrils and redness and swelling around the eyes may also be signs of concern.



Do not hesitate to have your veterinarian assess your pet if you are concerned, as most birds hide signs of illness until their disease is advanced and they become dangerously ill. The sooner your pet is seen by a veterinarian and the problem is identified, the better the chance of recovery

## Pet Poison Helpline

If you think your pet has been exposed to something harmful, please call your veterinarian or Pet Poison Helpline immediately.

Pet Poison Helpline

855-289-0358

Available 24/7

Please be advised that a one-time, per-incident consultation fee applies.

### In an emergency

Assess the situation so you can communicate clearly with your veterinarian. Most importantly, don't administer at-home treatment without first seeking veterinary advice.

### Get help

If your pet is unconscious, convulsing or having difficulty breathing, go immediately to the nearest emergency veterinary hospital. While they are stabilizing your pet, call Pet Poison Helpline at 855-289-0358 for treatment recommendations.

## We're here to help

Nationwide<sup>®</sup> offers pet insurance coverage for accidents, illnesses and preventive care

This educational pamphlet is provided by Nationwide in coordination with Pet Poison Helpline, an animal poison control center based out of Minneapolis, Minn. Driven by our shared passion for pets, our common goal is to provide pet lovers with valuable information on pet health and safety.

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