

Parakeet

Psittaciformes

🇫🇷 Perruche · 🇩🇪 Sittich



REGULATIONS

Psittaciformes; CITES varies by species

OPAn art. 13 annex 2: keep at least in pairs (social species). CITES App. I/II depending on species (permits for import/export). Minimum aviary sizes; enrichment/perches. Noise subject to local rules.



LIFESPAN

5–30 years



ADULT WEIGHT

30–120 g



LIFESTYLE

Diurnal



BODY TEMPERATURE

39–42 °C



SEXUAL MATURITY

6–24 months



INCUBATION

18–27 days



LITTER / CLUTCH SIZE

3–6 eggs



Habitat & environment



Type — Cage or aviary as large as possible, never round. Place away from kitchen and drafts. Use easy-to-clean materials; avoid galvanized (zinc-containing) metals.



Substrate — Low-dust substrate: newspaper, absorbent pad or kitchen paper. Loose bedding (hemp, cellulose) only in large, well-ventilated setups.



Exercise — Daily outings in a secured room (windows closed, mirrors covered, other pets away). Free flight recommended. Involve the bird in household activities rather than excessive petting.



Equipment

- Natural-wood perches of varying diameters (toes covering 2/3 to 3/4 of the circumference)
- Natural branches to chew
- Multiple feeding stations (encourage foraging)
- Fresh water changed daily
- Educational and puzzle toys (foraging)
- Foraging mat (especially appreciated by cockatiels)
- Lukewarm bath or shower 2–3×/week
- Hygrometer to monitor humidity (target 50–55 %)



To avoid

- Round cages (disorientation)
- Galvanized (zinc-containing) metals (cheap cages, bells, hardware)
- Sandpaper-covered perches (footpad lesions)
- Non-stick cookware in adjacent kitchen (PTFE)
- Scented candles, room sprays, air fresheners in the same room
- Accessible electric cables



Technical parameters



Ambient

18–25 °C

Comfortable for humans; 27–29 °C if the bird is unwell.

💡 Lighting

🕒 **Photoperiod** — 5–6 h in winter, 6–7 h in spring/autumn, 7–8 h in summer. Do not confuse with sleep duration (see Behaviour).

☀️ **UVB need** — Required (vitamin D synthesis, calcium absorption)

💡 **Lamp type** — Bird-specific UV lamp (sensitive avian eye: avoid reptile lamps, strobe effect)

🛒 **Recommended brands** — Arcadia Bird Lamp · Zoo Med AvianSun

🔄 **Replacement** — Yearly

📄 **UVB** does not pass through glass or plexiglass. Place the lamp inside the terrarium, under a protective grille.

⚠️ Environmental hazards & toxins

Heavy metals ⚠️ Lead · ⚠️ Zinc

Fumes & gases 🔍 Teflon / PTFE · 🚬 Cigarette smoke · 🌿 Marijuana smoke · ☠️ Carbon monoxide

Chemicals 🕯️ Scented products (candles, sprays, air fresheners) · 🧴 Household cleaners · 💄 Cosmetics (nail polish, hairspray, dyes) · 🐛 Household insecticides · 🪲 Mothballs (naphthalene, paradichlorobenzene) · 🎨 Paints, varnishes, polyurethane

Appliances & equipment 🔌 Overheated plastics · ⚡ Electric cables

Plants 🌸 Lily · 🌺 Oleander · 🌲 Yew · 🕒 Lily of the valley · 🌳 Oak (acorns and leaves) · 🌸 Foxglove · 🌺 Rhododendron / azalea · 🌸 Kalanchoe · 🌿 Dumb cane (Dieffenbachia) · 🌿 Umbrella plant (Schefflera) · 🌿 Crown vetch · 🌸 Lantana · 🌿 Rhubarb leaves

🐾 Behaviour

Social, lively, playful birds. Positive-reinforcement training is possible. Cockatiels in particular quickly learn a few words, whistles or tricks.

👥 **Social life** — Very social; the Swiss Animal Welfare Ordinance (art. 13 annex 2) requires keeping at least two individuals. Prefer a pair or small group over a lone bird.

🕒 **Activity cycle** — Diurnal, strong activity during the day, peaks at sunrise and sunset.

🌙 **Sleep & rest** — 10–12 h of uninterrupted sleep per night, in darkness and quiet. No television or stimulation in the evening. Chronic sleep deprivation compromises mental and physical health.

🔍 Foraging

Natural food-search behaviour. Must be exercised daily to prevent boredom, plucking and overeating. Cockatiels and budgerigars especially enjoy foraging mats.

🕒 **Time in the wild** — 6–8 h per day in the wild

🌱 Enrichment

- Foraging: essential
- Positive-reinforcement training (clicker)
- Branches, pine cones, natural ropes to chew
- Foraging mat for cockatiels
- Baths or showers 2–3×/week
- Daily outings outside the cage in a secured environment

🔍 Foraging — Techniques

- Offer larger pellets so the bird has to break them apart
- Distribute the ration to multiple spots in the cage
- Foraging mat (cockatiels, budgerigars): scatter food in the weave
- Puzzle toys (commercial or DIY)
- Hiding spots: seeds/pellets in paper balls, cardboard boxes
- Cover the food bowls so the bird has to destroy the wrapping

Nutrition

The information given here is a general reference. Each bird has specific nutritional needs that vary with species, age, health and lifestyle.

Balanced omnivore diet combining quality extruded pellets, fresh vegetables/fruit and a moderate share of seeds. Parakeets keep a higher plant share than large parrots, and seed intake stays controlled.

Daily base · 55–60 %

Recommended brands : Harrison's Bird Food · Psittacus · Lafeber (Nutri-Berries) · Tropicana Hagen · Zupreem

Pellet

Granulés extrudés haute qualité; base quotidienne.

Nutri-Berries

Billes agglomérées (graines + granulés + légumes/fruits); utiles en transition.

Vegetables & greens · 15–20 % (+ 15–20 % de fruits)

Higher plant share than in large parrots. Favour vegetables (fruit is sugary). Vary sources for vitamin A.

Watercress Vit A

Très riche en vitamine A.

Dandelion Vit A

Riche en vitamine A et calcium.

Spinach Vit A

Riche en vitamine A; à varier (oxalates).

Swiss Chard Vit A

Riche en vitamine A.

Lollo Rossa Lettuce Vit A

Riche en vitamine A.

Romaine Lettuce Vit A

Riche en vitamine A.

Lamb's Lettuce Vit A

Riche en vitamine A.

Kale Vit A

Riche en vitamine A et calcium.

Celery Vit A

Riche en vitamine A.

Fennel Vit A

Riche en vitamine A.

Turnip Greens Vit A

Riche en vitamine A.

Endive Vit A

Curly Endive Vit A

Escarole Vit A

Batavia Lettuce Vit A

Oak Leaf Lettuce

Broccoli

Bok Choy

Arugula Vit A

Green Bean

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Pellets & supplements

Complete extruded pellets as the daily staple.

Pellet

★ Treats (occasional) · 5 %

Small seeds, nuts and occasional protein sources. Seeds must remain a treat — even for parakeets, who love them.

Flax Seed

Graines trempées/germées possibles; surveiller les moisissures.

Pumpkin Seed

Sunflower Seed

Très grasse, à limiter strictement.

Almond

Walnut

Pecan

Whole Grain Rice

Féculents complets en petite quantité.

Whole Wheat Pasta

Féculents complets en petite quantité.

Fish

Source de vitamine B12; ponctuel.

Mealworm

Apport protéique occasionnel.

Vitamin A

Vitamin A is essential for epithelial tissues (eyes, skin, feathers, respiratory tract, reproductive and digestive organs). Deficiency causes squamous metaplasia: loss of barrier function, predisposition to infections and tumours. Main sources: dark leafy greens, watercress, dandelion, romaine, spinach, mango, papaya, apricot, melon.

Diet transition

Particularly relevant for parakeets, who are often raised on all-seed diets. The shift to a varied diet (pellets + vegetables/fruit + seeds as treats) must be gradual.

Duration : At least 1 week, often several weeks depending on the bird's habits.

Steps :

1. Gradually reduce the amount of seeds available.
2. Mix pellets into the seeds, then move them to a separate dish.
3. Offer finely cut fresh vegetables/fruit several times a day.
4. Increase variety until reaching 55–60 % pellets / 30–40 % veggies-fruit / 5 % seeds.

Tips :

- Hide pellets inside a favourite food.
- Mimicry effect: have another bird (or the owner) eat pellets in front of the bird.
- Use Nutri-Berries® during the transition (seeds + pellets + vegetables/fruit blends).
- Deliver part of the ration via foraging toys.

Warnings :

- Never withdraw seeds abruptly: possible hunger strike.
- Daily weighing during the transition (loss > 10 % = vet consultation).
- Sprouted seeds: mould risk (aspergillosis).

FREQUENCY

- Fresh meals (vegetables/fruit) morning and evening
- Pellets available throughout the day (ideally via foraging)
- Seeds as rewards only, not free-choice
- Fresh water changed daily

TO AVOID

Toxic or strongly discouraged foods. Fruit pips and stones contain small amounts of cyanide — remove on principle.



Chocolate

Théobromine : cardiotoxique.



Avocado

Persine : cardiotoxique, mortel.



Onion

Anémie hémolytique.



Garlic

Anémie hémolytique.



Apple Seeds

Cyanure (pépins et noyaux de pomme, abricot, pêche, cerise, prune).



Rhubarb

Acide oxalique.



Sweets

Xylitol et sucres — toxiques (xylitol particulièrement).



Health & prevention



Preventive medicine

Annual exam recommended. At least 1 month of quarantine for any new arrival (targeted PCR: PBFD, polyomavirus, chlamydiosis). Weekly home weighing. Yearly UV lamp replacement.



Surgery & neutering

Common procedures: mass excision (lipomas common in budgerigars), egg retention surgery, cloacal prolapse correction, wound debridement.



WARNING SIGNS

- Behavioural change (unusually quiet, aggression, altered vocalisations)
- Persistently ruffled feathers
- Loss of appetite or weight
- Apathy, sitting on the cage floor
- Feather plucking, pulled-out feathers
- Nasal discharge, periocular swelling, open-mouth breathing
- Repeated regurgitation (outside pair-bonding context)
- Abnormal droppings (colour, consistency, blood)

If any of these symptoms appear, prompt veterinary care is essential.
Contact an exotic-pet vet as soon as possible.



Common conditions

Vitamin A deficiency

SYMPTOMS Abscesses, oral granulomas, nasal discharge, periocular swelling, dyspnea, poor feather quality

CAUSE Seed-dominated diet, lack of greens

PREVENTION Variety of vitamin-A-rich greens; transition to pellets

Obesity / lipomas (budgerigar)

SYMPTOMS Overweight, subcutaneous abdominal masses, dyspnea

CAUSE Too many fatty seeds (sunflower), lack of exercise

PREVENTION Limit sunflower seeds, encourage foraging, increase free flight

Feather plucking

SYMPTOMS Pulled feathers (body, wings), skin lesions

CAUSE Lack of stimulation, boredom, stress, nutritional deficits, medical issues

PREVENTION Daily foraging, out-of-cage time, social interaction, dietary variety

Pododermatitis (bumblefoot)

SYMPTOMS Footpad lesions, lameness

CAUSE Uniform perches, obesity, sandpaper-covered perches

PREVENTION Natural-wood perches of varying diameters; weight management

Respiratory diseases (chlamydiosis, aspergillosis)

SYMPTOMS Dyspnea, open-mouth breathing, nasal discharge

CAUSE Inappropriate humidity, fumes (PTFE, tobacco), mouldy seeds, stress

PREVENTION Maintain 50–55 % humidity, avoid fumes, don't feed mouldy seeds

Household poisonings

SYMPTOMS Acute respiratory distress, sudden death (PTFE), neurological signs

CAUSE Overheated PTFE, lead/zinc, fumes, toxic plants, chemicals

PREVENTION Avoid PTFE and zinc-galvanized metal, safe houseplants, away from kitchen

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