

Parrots

Psittaciformes

 Perroquet
  Papageien


REGULATIONS

Psittaciformes; often CITES

Many species are CITES I/II (permits for international trade). OPAn art. 13 annex 2: keep at least in pairs; minimum sizes and daily flight recommended. Registration/chip may be required by some cantons for large species.



LIFESPAN

30–60 years



ADULT WEIGHT

0.2–1.5 kg



LIFESTYLE

Diurnal



BODY TEMPERATURE

39–42 °C



SEXUAL MATURITY

3–10 years



INCUBATION

26–28 days



LITTER / CLUTCH SIZE

2–4 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, wood/coir shavings) only in large, well-ventilated setups.



Exercise — Daily outings in a secured room; free flight recommended. Involve the bird in household activities rather than excessive petting (reduces reproductive behaviour).



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)
- Shelter or quiet sleeping area
- 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.



Humidity

50–55 %

Maintain with baths or showers; hygrometer recommended.

💡 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 (avian eyes perceive more frames/second; reptile lamps can cause an unpleasant strobe effect)

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

🔄 **Replacement** — Yearly

Particularly sensitive species (African grey): UVB-related calcium deficiency can cause severe neurological disorders.

📌 **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

Extremely intelligent animals requiring constant mental stimulation. Capable of social learning, imitation and complex communication.

👥 **Social life** — Very social; the Swiss Animal Welfare Ordinance (art. 13 annex 2) requires keeping at least two individuals together. Prefer involving the bird in family life over excessive petting (which encourages reproductive behaviour).

🕒 **Activity cycle** — Diurnal, very active 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 (digging, scratching, chewing, shredding, manipulating). In captivity, its absence is a major cause of overeating, feather plucking and stereotypies. Searching is playing, staying busy, and staying healthier.

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

🌱 Enrichment

- Foraging: essential
- Positive-reinforcement training (clicker)
- Medical training (cooperative handling for vet care)
- Softwood, pine cones, natural-fibre ropes to chew
- Baths or showers 2–3×/week
- Daily outings outside the cage in a secured environment
- Inclusion in family activities

🔍 Foraging — Techniques

- Offer larger pellets so the bird has to break them apart
- Distribute the ration to multiple spots in the cage/aviary
- Foraging mat (cockatiels, cockatoos, African grey): scatter food in the weave
- Puzzle toys (commercial or DIY)
- Hiding spots: seeds/pellets in paper balls, cardboard boxes (egg, cereal)
- Cover the food bowls so the bird has to destroy the wrapping
- Foraging tree: bird navigates branches to reach rewards

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 high-quality extruded pellets, fresh vegetables/fruit and a small share of seeds/nuts. Most diseases in captive birds are diet-related.

Daily base · 75 %

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 % (+ 5–10 % de fruits)

Strongly favour vegetables over fruit (sugary fruit disrupts lipid metabolism). Vary sources to ensure vitamin A intake.

Watercress

Très riche en vitamine A.

Dandelion

Riche en vitamine A et calcium.

Spinach

Riche en vitamine A; à varier (oxalates).

Swiss Chard

Riche en vitamine A.

Lollo Rossa Lettuce

Riche en vitamine A.

Romaine Lettuce

Riche en vitamine A.

Lamb's Lettuce

Riche en vitamine A.

Kale

Riche en vitamine A et calcium.

Celery

Riche en vitamine A.

Fennel

Riche en vitamine A.

Turnip Greens

Riche en vitamine A.

Endive

Curly Endive

Escarole

Batavia Lettuce

Oak Leaf Lettuce

Broccoli

Bok Choy

Arugula

Green Bean

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Pellets & supplements

Complete extruded pellets as the daily staple.

Pellet

★ Treats (occasional) · 5 %

Seeds, nuts and occasional protein sources (whole-grain starches, lean meat, fish, mealworms). Nuts are fat-rich: portion carefully. Macaws and cockatoos (except galah) tolerate a slightly larger share.

Walnut

Pecan

Cashew

Macadamia Nut

Almond

Flax Seed

Graines trempées/germées possibles; surveiller les moisissures.

Pumpkin Seed

Whole Grain Rice

Féculents complets en petite quantité.

Whole Wheat Pasta

Féculents complets en petite quantité.

White Meat

Viande maigre cuite, occasionnelle.

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 of the epithelium: loss of barrier function, predisposition to respiratory/skin infections and tumours. Sources: dark leafy greens, watercress, dandelion, romaine, spinach, mango, papaya, apricot, melon.

Diet transition

The shift from a seed-heavy diet to a varied one (pellets + vegetables/fruit + seeds) must be gradual. A poorly managed transition can lead to a serious hunger strike.

Duration : At least 1 week, often several weeks to months depending on the bird's habits and the owner's involvement.

Steps :

Tips :

- Hide pellets inside a favourite food.
- Mimicry effect: have another bird (or the owner) eat pellets in front of the bird.

1. Gradually reduce the amount of seeds available (while seeds are abundant, the bird won't try anything else).
2. Mix pellets into the seeds, then move them to a separate, visible dish.
3. Offer freshly cut vegetables/fruit several times a day if needed.
4. Increase the variety and frequency of new foods until reaching the 75 % pellets / 15-20 % veggies-fruit / 5 % seeds balance.

- Use Nutri-Berries® or similar during the transition (seeds + pellets + vegetables/fruit blends, palatable and complete).
- Deliver part of the ration via foraging toys to spark interest.

⚠ Warnings :

- Never withdraw seeds abruptly: the bird may hunger-strike for several days, with severe health consequences.
- Weigh daily during the transition (loss > 10 % = vet consultation).
- Beware of sprouted seeds: mould risk (aspergillosis).

🕒 FREQUENCY

- Fresh meals (vegetables/fruit) morning and evening
- Pellets available throughout the day (ideally via foraging)
- Seeds/nuts 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.



Garlic

Anémie hémolytique.



Rhubarb

Acide oxalique.



Avocado

Persine : cardiotoxique, mortel.



Apple Seeds

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



Sweets

Xylitol et sucres — toxiques (xylitol particulièrement).



Onion

Anémie hémolytique.



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, egg retention/dystocia surgery, cloacal prolapse correction, wound debridement, distal amputations (necrosis).



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, anorexia

CAUSE Diet too heavy in seeds, lacking in greens

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

Feather plucking

SYMPTOMS Pulled feathers (body, wings), skin lesions, stereotypies

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

PREVENTION Daily foraging, out-of-cage time, social interaction, dietary variety; vet check if recurring

Pododermatitis (bumblefoot)

SYMPTOMS Footpad lesions, lameness, granulomas

CAUSE Uniform perches, obesity, poor hygiene, sandpaper-covered perches

PREVENTION Natural-wood perches of varying diameters; weight management; perch hygiene

Respiratory diseases (chlamydiosis, aspergillosis)

SYMPTOMS Dyspnea, open-mouth breathing, nasal discharge, weight loss

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

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

Household poisonings

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

CAUSE Overheated PTFE, lead/zinc, fumes, toxic plants, chemicals (see environmental toxins)

PREVENTION Avoid PTFE and zinc-galvanized metal, safe houseplants, away from kitchen, no scented products



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