

## How to choose a cage for your Pet Bird



Choosing a cage for your pet is difficult as there is such a wide range of designs available. This fact sheet has been written to assist you with the selection of a cage suitable for the type of bird you wish to keep. Throughout it is important to realise that if you are unsure you must seek assistance.

### *Points to Consider*

- Make sure that you have enough time, space and the ability to care for your pet(s).
- Will you still be interested in them after the first week, month or year ?
- Will your pets be looked after when you go on holiday – even for a day ?
- Do you know their needs ? – How large will they grow ? – How long will they live ? – Do they smell ? – What do they eat ? Etc.

### *Finding the Answers*

Information about your birds and how to keep them can be obtained from reputable pet shopkeepers, veterinary surgeons, libraries, bird breeders and animal welfare organisations. You can visit our website on [www.spauk.net](http://www.spauk.net) where information is available on most varieties directly from the various breed organisations. Read as much as you can prior to making your purchase, both *Cage & Aviary Birds* (weekly) and *Birdkeeper* (monthly) are excellent publications whatever variety you wish to keep.

### *Decision*

Once you have decided on the type of bird you wish to keep, remembering that the best cage may not be the most expensive, the latest fashion or the one most attractive to you. Try to look at the cage and where you will keep it through your pets' eyes and ears. Is it likely to be too hot – cold, too draughty – stuffy, too dark – light, too humid – dry, too large – small and will it be too noisy for your bird (s)?

Now use the checklist to ensure that you make the correct choice.

- **Is the cage especially designed or the most suitable for your birds ?**  
If this is not obvious from the packaging, ask the shopkeeper or cage manufacturer whether it was designed for your type of pet and if it is suitable. If necessary ask for instructions on how to assemble and maintain the cage.
- **Is it easy to get access to the inside of the cage ?**  
If not, you may have difficulty in looking after your birds, cleaning the cage and replenishing the food and water.

- **Is a “Starter Kit” included with the cage ?**  
If not, ask the shopkeeper for suggestions about food and water containers and other items. Where necessary make sure some toys are provided.
- **Are the food and water containers safe ?**  
They should be easy to clean, heavy enough not to be easily knocked over, and small enough to stop your bird (s) climbing in and leaving droppings. Be careful not to place containers directly under perches as they may become fouled. Food hoppers and water dispensers may be more suitable than open bowls or dishes.
- **Does the cage have corners ?**  
Some birds like to go into corners. If you buy a circular or oval cage make sure that you provide a secluded area for your bird to use.
- **Is there enough room in the cage?**  
Ideally you should provide an aviary with room for the birds to fly around. If you cannot provide this, then make sure there is room for your birds to stretch their wings easily at all levels of cage. Be sure to allow room for growing. Young birds may continue to grow for a few weeks after you buy them.
- **Will you be able to get your bird out of its cage easily ?**  
In the wild most predators catch their prey from above. There should ideally be a front and side access point otherwise your birds might be frightened.
- **Will the cage survive the attentions of your bird ?**  
Is the cage strong enough to cope with your bird’s beak ? Wire cages are likely to be stronger than wooden ones. These are also heavier than plastic cages and therefore less likely to fall over if your bird is very active.

## **Special Needs**

### ***Housing***

Cages vary with some having horizontal bars and some vertical, if your pet is a climber such as the budgerigar then it would be more suited to a cage with horizontal bars. Check that the spacing is not too small, which could trap the

birds' head or too large, perhaps allowing them to escape. Make sure that any preservatives used on wooden parts of the cage are lead free.

### ***Perches***

You must ensure that there is sufficient perching for your bird(s) and that they are of differing thickness. Check whether the perches are the right size by looking at your bird's feet. If the claws overlap when gripping the perch, then the perch is too thin. Fruit tree twigs or small branches (pear or apple), complete with bark, or dowel rods make good perches. Make sure the perches are firmly attached to the cage and that any twigs used are clean and have not been soiled by toxic sprays or wild bird droppings. Perches should be placed at different heights within the cage making sure that your pet is able to stand on the top perch without touching the cage top.

### ***Furnishings***

Hanging swings can be popular for some species of bird, make sure that the bar is the right thickness for a secure foothold. Be careful not to overcrowd the cage with too many toys.

This fact sheet is provided as a guide and should be read in conjunction with information available for the type of bird you wish to keep.

This fact sheet has been produced for:  
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