



## Lovebirds

[www.exoticpetvet.co.uk](http://www.exoticpetvet.co.uk)

Lovebirds are small sociable parrots originating from Africa. They are not the most talkative of birds, but can be taught to make different sounds, and can be very interactive with humans. Ideally, all birds should be paired up with a SAME SPECIES, OPPOSITE SEX bird for lifetime companionship.

Most Lovebirds are sexually monomorphic, meaning that they can only be definitively sexed by DNA testing from a blood sample or feather pluck. Only the Abyssinian lovebird, the Madagascar lovebird, and the black-collared lovebird are sexually dimorphic, meaning that they can be sexed visually.

### Scientific Classification

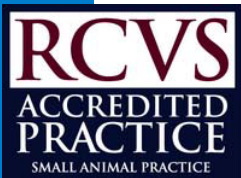
Lovebirds belong to the Order Psittaciformes, Family Psittacidae, Genus *Agapornis* of which there are 9 species of lovebirds.

- Peach-faced Lovebird, *Agapornis roseicollis*
- Masked Lovebird, *Agapornis personata*
- Fischer's Lovebird, *Agapornis fischeri*
- Nyasa Lovebird, *Agapornis lilianae*
- Black-cheeked Lovebird, *Agapornis nigrigenis*
- Madagascar Lovebird, *Agapornis canus*
- Abyssinian Lovebird, *Agapornis taranta*
- Red-faced Lovebird, *Agapornis pullarius*
- Black-collared Lovebird, *Agapornis swinderniana*

### General care

Lovebirds naturally live in small flocks, but in captivity are best kept in pairs as they can be aggressive to other birds. Ideally they will be happiest in a spacious aviary set up. This should be an outdoor enclosure made of strong wire mesh (which should be zinc free), with an easily cleanable floor and plenty of room for the birds to fly around. In addition to the flying area, a sheltered sleeping area should be provided to protect from the worst of the British weather. The shelter should also provide shade on any sunny days. Perches can be placed at varying heights around the enclosure, with branches of different diameters providing the most natural setup. Appropriate branches can include those from the ash, hazel, birch, willow, eucalyptus, chestnut, sycamore, elder and untreated fruit trees. It is also particularly important to ensure that the enclosure is secure, both to stop the birds getting out (double security doors are the best way to prevent an escape) and to stop predators getting in.

Alternatively, if an aviary is not an option, lovebirds may be housed indoors in a cage setup. Indoor birds will require more individual attention and stimulation but will often form a close bond with their owners. A cage setup should also be as spacious as possible and placed out of direct sunlight and draughts. It should also be situated away from any item that may give off toxic fumes, such as non-stick cooking utensils, which can release lethal fumes when heated. It is similarly important to ensure that the cage is made out of zinc-free



### Barrier Animal Care Clinic LLP

Registered in England Partnership No. OC303416  
 Members: B Spolander BVSc MRCVS & S Rennie BA VetMB MRCVS  
 Tel: 020 8293 6580 Fax: 020 8858 5609 Email: [wellpetclinic@btconnect.com](mailto:wellpetclinic@btconnect.com)  
[www.wellpetclinic.co.uk](http://www.wellpetclinic.co.uk)  
 VAT Ref: 691 3368 16





materials as zinc is also very toxic to these birds. A variety of branches can be placed as perches as in an aviary setup, and different toys should be added and changed regularly to entertain birds. If planning to be out of the house for a long time, it is also a good idea to leave a radio program on at a low volume to give the birds some stimulation.

Free flight is an essential requirement and birds should be given the opportunity for exercise daily. It is however, important to ensure that the room they are allowed to fly around is totally secure with all windows, doors and chimneys blocked off, heaters and fans turned off and any potentially poisonous house plants removed or covered. If started young, birds can be easily trained to perch on a finger and returned to the cage.

### Hygiene

Cages should be "spot-cleaned" daily to remove any droppings, feathers, uneaten greens or husks. Once a week, ideally while the birds are exercising, the whole cage and furniture can be disinfected (further details of suitable disinfectants can be obtained from your vet) and branches replaced as necessary.

### Diet

In the wild, these birds eat a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, grasses and seeds. It is however, difficult to replicate this diet in captivity as parrots can be notoriously fussy when fed a traditional parrot seed mix, picking out the parts they like best (which are usually not the most nutritious!). Feeding a good quality complete pellet diet is the best way to ensure your lovebird has the best balance of nutrients. Treats can be given to provide interest, including small pieces of oranges, apples, corn on the cob, or grated carrot, but these should form no more than 10% of the total diet. A cuttlebone should be provided for additional calcium and to allow the bird to wear down its beak. Grit will provide additional minerals and aid with digestion of food.

Water should be available both for drinking, and in a shallow saucer for bathing. Fresh food and water should be provided daily and food containers cleaned out.

### Lifespan

Lovebirds generally live about 10-15 years.

### Signs of health

A healthy lovebird will be bright and alert with clear eyes and nostrils, shiny feathers and a clean vent. It is important to become familiar with your lovebird's normal behaviour and droppings, in order that signs of illness can be noticed at an early stage. Beak and nails should also be checked regularly in case trimming is required. It is advisable to take your bird to a vet who routinely deals with birds for a general health check at least once a year.

### Signs of illness

Birds will often not show obvious signs of illness until they are very sick, but you should look out for your lovebird appearing "fluffed up", breathing fast or noisily with its mouth open, any discharges from the eyes or nostrils or any changes in droppings. Changes in beak, nail or feather condition including excessive feather plucking may also indicate a more chronic illness. If you have any concerns, do not hesitate to contact a vet as soon as possible.

**This caresheet is only intended as a general guideline, so please ask for further information.**

**Written and researched by Joanna Hedley BVM&S MRCVS**



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[www.wellpetclinic.co.uk](http://www.wellpetclinic.co.uk)  
VAT Reg: 691 3368 16

