**YVCipedia AVIAN**

African Grey Parrot Care Sheet

## **Species Overview**

African Grey Parrots are renowned for their remarkable intelligence, emotional sensitivity, and unmatched ability to mimic human speech. Native to the rainforests of West and Central Africa, these medium-sized parrots come in two primary subspecies: the **Congo African Grey** (larger, with bright red tail feathers) and the **Timneh African Grey** (smaller, with a darker, maroon tail and horn-colored beak).

At YVC, we remind prospective owners that African Greys are more than just talkers—they’re deep-feeling, observant creatures who thrive with structure, consistency, and social engagement. With proper care, they can live **40–60 years**, making them a multi-decade commitment.

## **Housing & Environment**

African Greys are naturally curious and cautious. They require a secure, clean space to retreat to, but also need daily interaction and ample time outside their enclosure to stay mentally and physically healthy.

### **Enclosure Recommendations**

For adult African Greys, we recommend a cage no smaller than **36"x24"x48"** with **¾" bar spacing**. Horizontal bars help support their love of climbing. At YVC, we typically suggest **stainless steel or powder-coated cages** for longevity and safety.

Inside the cage, rotate **2–3 natural perches** of varying textures and widths to support foot health. Keep the setup clean but not sterile—Greys enjoy foraging and subtle environmental changes. Avoid clutter, but always leave space for wing extension and movement.

### **Placement & Light**

Cages should be placed in areas of the home where the bird can observe daily activity without being overwhelmed. Greys bond closely with their families and feel safest when included in routine life, but they also need a **quiet, darkened space at night** for at least **10–12 hours of uninterrupted rest**.

Greys benefit from **full-spectrum or UVB lighting** if they don't have regular access to natural sunlight. Their physiology, particularly calcium metabolism, relies on proper light cycles.

## **Diet & Nutrition**

Diet is one of the most important contributors to African Grey health. These birds are prone to **calcium deficiency (hypocalcemia)**, which can cause everything from lethargy and muscle tremors to seizures. At YVC, we put strong emphasis on a **balanced, formulated diet** with targeted supplementation.

### **Recommended Core Diet**

We suggest making **pellets** (such as **Mazuri, Harrison’s, Roudybush, or Zupreem**) the foundation of their diet—around **60–70%** of daily intake. In addition to pellets, offer:

* **Fresh vegetables** like leafy greens, carrots, peppers, and squash
* **Fruits** in moderation—berries, apple slices, banana, and papaya 2–3x/week
* **Cooked legumes and grains**, such as quinoa, lentils, or brown rice
* **Calcium supplementation**, either through a **cuttlebone**, mineral block, or as directed by your vet

Seed-heavy diets are discouraged due to their high fat and low nutrient content. Clean, fresh water should be available at all times and changed daily.

## **Behavior & Handling**

Greys are famously intelligent and intuitive—but they’re also prone to anxiety if their environment is unpredictable or overstimulating. Trust and consistency are everything. At YVC, we find that Greys do best with **a calm, predictable routine**, plenty of **positive reinforcement**, and **gradual exposure** to new experiences.

Building a relationship with an African Grey takes patience. Many are shy or aloof at first but may become deeply bonded to a single person over time. They’re excellent mimics—not just of words, but also of tone, timing, and household sounds.

## **Enrichment**

Mental stimulation is not optional—it’s vital. Greys need to be challenged, engaged, and entertained on a daily basis. Without enough stimulation, they are at high risk for **feather destructive behavior (FDB)** and psychological distress.

### **Enrichment Ideas**

* **Foraging toys** that require work to access food
* **Shreddable items** like clean cardboard, palm leaves, and paper
* **Safe household sounds or music**, particularly if alone during the day
* **Puzzle feeders and trick training sessions**
* Rotating **visual and tactile toys** weekly to avoid boredom
* **Consistent interaction**—talking, singing, dancing, or simple companionship

Greys are thinkers. They notice small changes and appreciate novel tasks—but they also appreciate routine. A balance between familiarity and surprise works best.

## **Health & Veterinary Care**

At YVC, we encourage annual wellness visits for all companion birds, especially African Greys, who are particularly susceptible to certain preventable conditions.

### **Common Health Issues**

* **Hypocalcemia**, often from poor diet or lack of UVB light
* **Feather picking or plucking**, usually due to stress, boredom, or underlying illness
* **Respiratory infections**, which can progress quickly if untreated
* **Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease (PBFD)**, a serious viral illness
* **Aspergillosis**, a fungal respiratory condition in dusty or poorly ventilated spaces

Greys are masters at masking illness. Early signs may include subtle behavioral shifts, reduced appetite, fluffed feathers, or voice changes. If your bird seems “off,” it’s always worth checking in with us.

## **Facts & FAQs**

* Greys can learn **hundreds of words** and often mimic voices or phrases with startling accuracy
* Not all Greys talk, and some prefer **environmental sounds** or noises they find amusing
* These birds may develop **strong preferences for certain people** and avoid others
* African Greys are among the **longest-lived pet birds**—it’s not unusual for a well-cared-for individual to reach 50–60 years
* A well-socialized Grey is incredibly rewarding, but they are not ideal for casual or hands-off bird owners

## **Supplies Checklist**

* Large cage (minimum 36"x24"x48") with ¾" bar spacing
* Natural wood perches of varying widths
* High-quality pellets (Mazuri, Harrison’s, Roudybush)
* Fresh vegetables and limited fruit
* Cuttlebone or calcium block
* Rotating toys and puzzle feeders
* Full-spectrum or UVB light (if indoors)
* Travel carrier for safe transport
* Air purifier or humidifier if air quality is a concern
* Stainless steel or ceramic food/water dishes (changed daily)

*Yarmouth Veterinary Center*