## **YVCipedia AVIAN**

Budgerigars (Budgies/Parakeets) Care Sheet

## **Species Overview**

The **Parakeet**, more accurately called the **Budgerigar** or **Budgie**, is one of the most popular pet bird species worldwide. Originating from the grasslands of Australia, Budgies are small, active parrots with cheerful vocalizations, striking coloration, and a deep social nature. While often perceived as beginner birds, they require just as much thoughtful care and attention as larger parrots.

At YVC, we find that Budgies can make wonderful companions when given proper housing, enrichment, and diet. They are highly social—bonding either with other budgies or with humans if housed alone—and may live 8–12 years or more in a well-cared-for home.

## **Housing & Environment**

Despite their small size, Budgies are extremely active and benefit from spacious enclosures with ample opportunity for climbing and flying. We often remind owners that a larger cage is not just better—it's essential.

A minimum cage size of 18"x18"x24" with ½-inch bar spacing may suffice for a single Budgie, but we strongly recommend larger horizontal cages, especially if more than one bird is housed. Horizontal bars support their natural climbing instincts, and multiple natural perches of varied diameter help prevent foot issues.

Budgies do best in a quiet room with good natural light (or full-spectrum lighting) and away from drafts or kitchens. Maintaining a stable environment—including 10–12 hours of darkness at night—helps regulate hormones and supports their overall health.

## **Diet & Nutrition**

The myth that parakeets should eat only seeds is one we regularly address at YVC. In reality, a seed-only diet can lead to malnutrition, obesity, and shortened lifespan. A varied, pelleted-based diet with fresh produce is key.

### **Daily Diet Breakdown:**

* **Pellets (50–60%)**: Choose a species-specific, high-quality pellet such as **Mazuri** or **Lafeber Avi-Cakes**. Nutri-Berries are also excellent for stimulating natural foraging behavior.
* **Vegetables (25–30%)**: Budgies often enjoy leafy greens (romaine, kale), carrots, and broccoli. Try finely chopping veggies and offering them daily.
* **Fruits (5–10%)**: Occasional small pieces of apple, melon, or berries are appreciated, but should remain limited due to sugar content.
* **Seeds (treats only)**: We recommend using seeds sparingly—primarily during training or as enrichment.
* **Water**: Always provide clean, fresh water. Budgies are sensitive to dirty water and containers should be scrubbed daily.

Many Budgies are reluctant to switch off seed diets, so gradual transitions and food play (like offering greens clipped to the cage) can help.

## **Behavior & Handling**

Parakeets are curious, bright, and social birds. With regular, gentle handling and a calm routine, they can become deeply bonded with their person and even learn to mimic words or tunes.

New Budgies may be nervous at first—earning their trust requires consistency and patience. At YVC, we recommend starting with hand-feeding treats through the bars before progressing to open cage interaction. Positive reinforcement and respecting the bird's comfort level are key.

These birds are highly vocal and communicative. While they are not known for loudness, their constant chattering, chirping, and mimicry make them lively companions. Social interaction is critical—either with their human or a same-species companion.

## **Enrichment**

Boredom is a major cause of behavioral problems in Budgies, including feather picking and pacing. Mental and physical stimulation must be part of their daily routine.

We recommend offering a rotation of small, lightweight toys that are safe for shredding, swinging, or climbing. Budgies also enjoy mirrors and bells, but solitary birds may become overly attached—so use these mindfully. Foraging toys filled with herbs or dry vegetables can encourage natural food-seeking behavior.

Daily out-of-cage time (in a bird-safe space) enhances their physical fitness and confidence. Even a short flight session each day can dramatically improve their quality of life.

## **Health & Veterinary Care**

Although small, Budgies are not low-maintenance when it comes to health. Subtle signs of illness often go unnoticed until conditions become serious, which is why **annual wellness exams and fecal testing** are part of YVC’s standard recommendation for all parakeets. We may also suggest **additional testing**, especially in aging birds or those showing early signs of illness.

Common issues we watch for include:

* **Obesity and fatty liver disease**, often from seed-heavy diets
* **Respiratory infections**, especially in homes with poor air quality
* **Scaly face mites**, which cause crusting around the beak and eyes
* **Reproductive problems**, particularly in females kept on high-calorie diets or irregular light cycles

Early signs of illness may include fluffed feathers, changes in droppings, reduced vocalization, or changes in appetite. Any of these should prompt an immediate veterinary exam.

## **Facts & FAQs**

* Budgies are dimorphic—males typically have a blue cere (area above the beak), while females’ ceres are white to tan
* They are capable of learning dozens of words and tunes with patient repetition
* Budgies molt regularly; light, seasonal feather loss is normal, but bald patches are not
* With early and consistent handling, many Budgies enjoy head scritches and gentle interaction
* Despite their size, Budgies need the same mental stimulation and preventative care as larger parrots

## **Supplies Checklist**

For a healthy and happy Budgie, we recommend:

* Spacious cage with horizontal bars and multiple perches
* Mazuri pellets, Nutri-Berries, Avi-Cakes, and fresh vegetables
* Clean, shallow water and food dishes
* Lightweight toys and safe shreddables
* Foraging toys or clip-on veggie holders
* Full-spectrum lighting or access to indirect sunlight
* A bird-safe travel carrier
* Night cover or quiet space for 10–12 hours of rest
* Avian-safe cleaning products
* Bathing dish or light misting for feather care

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