**YVCipedia AVIAN**

Parrotlet Care Sheet

## **Species Overview**

**Parrotlets** are small parrots with big personalities. Despite measuring just 4–5 inches in length, they often exhibit the boldness and intelligence of much larger birds. Native to Central and South America, the most commonly kept species in captivity are the Pacific and Green-rumped Parrotlets.

At YVC, we find that Parrotlets make delightful companions for those who appreciate a confident, inquisitive bird in a petite package. While their small size makes them seem low-maintenance, they require regular attention, enrichment, and structured care to stay healthy and well-adjusted. With proper husbandry, they can live 15–20 years or more.

## **Housing & Environment**

Parrotlets are highly active and benefit from cages that allow for climbing, flying, and exploration. A minimum cage size of 18"x18"x24" with no more than ½-inch bar spacing is appropriate for a single bird, though we often recommend going larger when possible.

Natural wood or rope perches in varying diameters support foot health, and toys should be rotated regularly to prevent boredom. These birds are known to chew enthusiastically, so safe destructible materials are a must.

Place their cage in a bright but draft-free area with consistent light and dark cycles. At YVC, we recommend 10–12 hours of uninterrupted sleep in a quiet, darkened space to support behavioral stability.

While hardy overall, Parrotlets can be sensitive to changes in temperature or air quality. A typical household range of 65–80°F is ideal, and rooms with fumes, aerosols, or smoking should be avoided.

## **Diet & Nutrition**

Although small, Parrotlets have complex nutritional needs. One of the most common mistakes we see is over-reliance on seeds, which leads to obesity and nutrient deficiencies over time. Instead, we recommend a carefully balanced, pelleted-based diet with fresh vegetables as the cornerstone of nutrition.

### **At YVC, we recommend the following breakdown:**

* **Pellets (60–70%)**: Choose high-quality, species-appropriate pellets such as **Mazuri**, **Harrison’s**, or **Lafeber Nutri-Berries**. These offer balanced nutrition in a convenient format.
* **Vegetables (20–25%)**: Leafy greens (such as kale, dandelion greens, or romaine), as well as finely chopped carrots, broccoli, or squash are excellent daily additions.
* **Fruits and grains (5–10%)**: Small bits of berries, apple, or melon are fine in moderation, along with occasional cooked quinoa or brown rice.
* **Seeds**: Best reserved for training rewards or enrichment rather than daily feeding.

Fresh water should be available at all times, and we advise changing it daily. Many Parrotlets also enjoy bathing—offer a shallow dish or light misting a few times a week.

## **Behavior & Handling**

Parrotlets are independent-minded birds, often described as “tiny Amazons” because of their assertiveness and confidence. They are intelligent, observant, and capable of strong bonds with their humans—especially when socialized from a young age.

At YVC, we encourage daily, gentle interaction to maintain trust and prevent territorial behaviors. Single Parrotlets generally bond more closely with people, while pairs may bond more with each other. Either way, structured playtime and training help reinforce healthy relationships.

They enjoy exploring, climbing, and learning tricks—and with consistency and patience, many can be taught simple behaviors using positive reinforcement. Without attention, however, they may become cage aggressive or nippy, so regular enrichment and clear boundaries are important.

## **Enrichment**

Mental stimulation is essential for a well-adjusted Parrotlet. Without it, they may develop undesirable behaviors such as feather plucking or repetitive pacing.

We recommend puzzle toys, foraging activities, and a rotating supply of destructible items like paper, soft wood, or safe cardboard. At YVC, we also encourage clients to involve their Parrotlets in everyday routines—talking to them, sharing safe produce, or doing brief training sessions during mealtimes.

A few short flights in a safe room each day make a big difference in both health and happiness, especially for single birds.

## **Health & Veterinary Care**

Parrotlets are prone to hiding illness, which is why we emphasize **annual wellness exams and fecal testing** for all pet birds at YVC. Depending on the bird’s age, history, or symptoms, we may recommend **blood panels** or additional diagnostics as part of a proactive approach to care.

Health concerns we commonly see include:

* **Nutritional imbalances**, particularly from seed-heavy diets
* **Trauma**, such as broken feathers or beak injuries in birds allowed free-range time without supervision
* **Obesity** or **lipomas**, especially in birds receiving too many seeds or table scraps
* **Aggression** or feather destruction due to understimulation

Owners should watch for subtle changes: reduced vocalization, puffed-up posture, unusual droppings, or decreased appetite. These may be the only early signs of illness and should prompt a visit.

## **Facts & FAQs**

* Parrotlets are often confused with lovebirds, but they tend to be less physically affectionate and more independent
* They are sexually dimorphic—males usually have blue behind the eyes and on the rump, while females lack these markings
* Many can learn basic tricks or words with repetition, though they’re not typically strong talkers
* Even though they’re small, Parrotlets need just as much attention and enrichment as larger parrots
* With consistent care, they can live 15–20 years—sometimes longer in well-managed homes

## **Supplies Checklist**

For Parrotlet care, we recommend:

* Spacious cage with horizontal bars and a variety of natural perches
* Pellets (Mazuri, Harrison’s, or Nutri-Berries), daily fresh vegetables, and limited fruits
* Clean food and water dishes, changed daily
* Toys that encourage shredding, climbing, and foraging
* A shallow dish or misting bottle for bathing
* Full-spectrum lighting if no access to natural sunlight
* Travel carrier for exams or emergencies
* Quiet, dark sleep area for 10–12 hours of rest
* Bird-safe cleaning supplies and a soft towel for handling if needed

*Yarmouth Veterinary Center*