**YVCipedia AVIAN**

Zebra Finch Care Sheet

## **Species Overview**

The Zebra Finch (Taeniopygia guttata) is one of the most popular and hardy small companion birds. Native to Australia and parts of Indonesia, these finches are easily recognizable by their striped chest, bright beak, and cheerful chirping. They are social, active, and relatively easy to care for—making them an excellent choice for both beginner and experienced bird owners.

At YVC, we find that Zebra Finches do best in pairs or small groups and thrive in environments that allow for flight, routine, and gentle observation. While they are not typically hand-tamed or interactive like parrots, they are endlessly entertaining to watch and listen to, and their care still requires thoughtful planning.

## **Housing & Environment**

Because finches are active flyers rather than climbers, horizontal space is more important than vertical height. We recommend a flight cage that is as wide as possible—ideally at least 30" wide for a pair, with narrow bar spacing (no more than ½ inch) to prevent injury.

Zebra Finches prefer being housed in pairs, as they are strongly social and may become stressed or depressed when alone. The cage should be located in a bright room with natural daylight cycles, away from drafts, kitchens, or loud, stressful areas. At YVC, we often suggest full-spectrum lighting for homes without much natural light.

Humidity levels of 40–60% are comfortable for these birds, and room temperatures should stay between 65–80°F. A consistent day/night rhythm supports their immune and hormonal health, so 10–12 hours of quiet darkness at night is ideal.

## **Diet & Nutrition**

A balanced diet helps prevent many of the common health problems we see in Zebra Finches, such as obesity, calcium deficiency, and egg-binding in females. At YVC, we recommend the following breakdown:

**Diet Composition:**

* **50–60%:** High-quality formulated finch seed mix or pellet-based diet (Mazuri, Harrison’s, Roudybush)
* **25–30%:** Fresh vegetables (chopped leafy greens like romaine, dandelion, or kale; carrots; sweet corn)
* **10–15%:** Fruits (apple, pear, berries—given sparingly due to sugar content)

In addition to their daily diet, we recommend offering:

* A cuttlebone or mineral block for calcium
* A shallow dish of egg food (especially during molting or breeding)
* Clean, fresh water changed daily

Avoid seed-only diets, as they can lead to long-term nutritional imbalances. At YVC, we often encourage offering soft foods and fresh greens clipped to the side of the cage to encourage natural foraging behaviors.

## **Behavior & Handling**

Zebra Finches are not typically hand-tamed pets but are delightful to watch as they go about their social routines. They are most comfortable when left to interact with each other, and with time, they will become accustomed to your presence.

They tend to be most active in the morning and late afternoon, spending their time flying, preening, vocalizing, and interacting with cage mates. When frightened or startled, they may panic and fly erratically—so slow, deliberate movements around their cage are best.

Though handling is rarely necessary, if a finch must be caught, use a soft towel or your hand in a darkened room to minimize stress. At YVC, we always recommend using caution and keeping handling to a minimum outside of medical or cleaning needs.

## **Enrichment**

Even though Zebra Finches aren’t toy-oriented like parrots, they still need daily enrichment. Cage design is a key part of this. Provide several natural perches (not all of the same size or material), swings, and open space to fly across the cage.

They also enjoy:

* Seeding grasses or spray millet hung in the cage occasionally
* Paper shredders or small nesting materials (like coconut fiber) if not actively trying to avoid breeding
* Soft bird-safe music or natural ambient sounds during the day

At YVC, we often remind owners that observation is part of enrichment too. Just watching their interactions and vocalizations is part of what makes keeping finches so rewarding.

## **Health & Veterinary Care**

Zebra Finches are relatively hardy but still benefit from routine veterinary care. At YVC, we recommend annual exams and fecal parasite screening, with occasional bloodwork based on age or health status.

Signs of illness in finches can be subtle and include:

* Fluffed appearance or lethargy
* Decreased appetite or vocalization
* Labored breathing or tail bobbing
* Dirty vent or changes in droppings

Common medical concerns include:

* Egg binding (especially in females on poor diets)
* Air sac mites
* Bacterial infections
* Feather loss due to over-preening or parasites

Prompt attention to any changes in behavior or condition is important, as these small birds can decline quickly without intervention.

## **Facts & FAQs**

* Zebra Finches are monogamous and often bond closely with one mate
* Males sing while females generally do not
* With good care, they often live 5–8 years—sometimes longer
* Their soft peeping and chirping are typically not disruptive, making them ideal for apartment living
* While they can breed easily in captivity, we don’t recommend encouraging breeding without a full understanding of their needs and reproductive risks

## **Supplies Checklist**

* Flight-style cage (minimum 30" wide for a pair) with narrow bar spacing
* Multiple natural perches and swings
* High-quality seed/pellet mix and fresh produce
* Cuttlebone or mineral block
* Water and food dishes (daily cleaning recommended)
* Nest box or enrichment hut (only if breeding is intentional)
* Travel carrier for veterinary visits
* Full-spectrum lighting or access to natural light
* Safe cage cleaning supplies (no harsh chemicals)
* Soft towel for safe handling if needed

*Yarmouth Veterinary Center*