

# Your bird's welfare needs



Do you know the five key things birds need for a happy and healthy life?

According to the recent "Pet-Care Practices in Victoria"<sup>1</sup> research, many Victorian bird owners don't.

This research involved a survey of 1,629 dog, cat, bird and rabbit owners in Victoria. It aimed to measure how well owners understood their pets' welfare needs.

The five key welfare needs are summarised as follows:



## Environment

The need for a suitable environment (place to live)



## Diet

The need for a suitable diet



## Behaviour

The need to express normal behaviour



## Companionship

The need to live with, or apart from, other animals



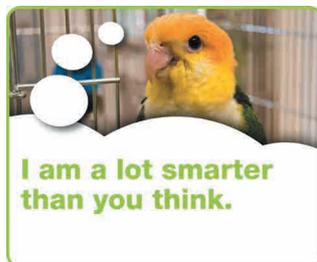
## Health

The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease

## Welfare worries for birds

- Small cages - 32 per cent of indoor birds are in cages that don't allow enough movement.
- No company - 59 per cent of birds live lonely lives, without the companionship of another bird.
- Wrong diet - 63 per cent of owners feed birds seed mixes that lead to obesity.
- Boredom - 20 per cent of owners don't provide toys or other objects for their birds to play with.
- Exercise - 56 per cent of owners don't provide indoor birds with free flight time outside the cage.
- Lack of health care - 48 per cent of birds are not treated for intestinal worms, and 44 per cent are not treated for external parasites.

<sup>1</sup> Bennett, P.C., Mornement, K., & Howell, T. (2013). Pet-care practices in Victoria, 2013: a survey of bird, cat, dog and rabbit owners. Unpublished report, La Trobe University, Australia.



## Top tips for bird owners

- Upgrade to the biggest indoor cage or outdoor aviary you can afford. Remember that birds prefer cages that are wide rather than tall and narrow (birds don't fly like helicopters).
- Get your bird a companion of the same or similar species (and read how to safely introduce a new bird). If you must have a solitary bird, try providing it with access to a mirror (birds such as budgies think their reflection is another bird).
- Stop feeding your bird fatty seed mixes (including those available from the supermarket). Instead, feed your bird commercially prepared bird pellets (available from pet stores and vets), plus fresh vegetables daily. Keep seeds only for treats.
- Birds, especially parrots, are really smart! Prevent boredom by providing birds with toys, rotated regularly. Buy from pet shops or online, or make your own - fresh cut (non

poisonous) branches, paper towel rolls, paper to shred etc. Or get your bird to work for its food - visit the DEPI website for more ideas ([www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets)).

- Give your indoor bird some supervised sessions flying free out of the cage. Visit the DEPI website ([www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets)) to read how to bird proof your home, and other tips to ensure this is a safe and enjoyable experience.
- Treat your bird for both internal and external parasites. The parasite control will differ between species, housing systems, number of birds and exposure to new or wild birds. Your veterinarian will be able to assist you in choosing the right treatment.

Doing just one of these things today will make a big difference to your bird's life!

## Learn more

Learn more about the Pet-Care Practices research results, and the welfare needs of birds – visit [www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets)



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