

CANARIES



Companion Bird Care
SERIES

Most Common Disorders of Canaries

- Feather cysts
- Baldness
- Obesity, fatty tumors
- Air sac and tracheal mites
- Skin mites
- Canary poxvirus
- Egg binding
- Cataracts
- Internal parasites
- Bacterial diseases
- Constricted feet and digits
- Damaged nails and beak
- Leg fractures
- Fungal infections
- Respiratory disease

Many diseases can be prevented with regular veterinary care, proper diet and housing. For these reasons, it is important to develop a relationship with a veterinarian who is experienced in avian preventive care, medicine and surgery. For help in finding an avian veterinarian in your area, contact the Association of Avian Veterinarians (AAV) by visiting www.AAV.org and click on "Find a Vet near you" or contact the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners, www.ABVP.com/diplomate.

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Canaries are native to the Canary Islands, Madeira and the Azores, and have been maintained as pets in Europe since the 16th century. Because canaries breed intensively in captivity, pairings over this time period have resulted in many distinct varieties and mutations. These mutations bear little resemblance to their green, free-ranging ancestors. Depending on the qualities desired, canaries may be bred for color variations, size and shape characteristics, feather traits or singing ability. The Norwich and Yorkshire are large, robust birds, while the Glouster, a miniature breed, is known for the cap of feathers on its head. American Singers and Rollers are bred especially for their vocal ability. Because today's canaries come from a small gene pool, mutations may be associated with genetic abnormalities and reduced life span. Birds with undesirable genetic traits should not be bred.

What to Expect from Your Canary

Canaries are tidy, nondestructive and easy to care for, but they do not like to be handled. They are appreciated most for their pleasant, melodious song. All

male canaries sing, starting as early as three months of age. If a male canary becomes ill, he may stop singing until the following spring even though the initial illness has resolved.

Vital Statistics

Body length: 4-7 inches (10-18 cm)

Body weight: 12-30 g

Age of sexual maturity: 5 months

Average life span: 20-25 years

Canaries tend to be territorial, and are often kept as a single pet. Multiple males are kept in individual cages; however, group housing with mixed ages and sexes may work in large flight cages with adequate perches and multiple feeding and watering stations. Canaries are known to bully other smaller birds such as finches.

Is Your Canary a Male or a Female?

The easiest way to tell the sex of a canary is to listen for the characteristic singing of the male bird, especially during breeding season. Male and female canaries can't be distinguished just by appearance. Alternatively, a blood test may be used for sex determination.

What Should You Feed Your Canary?

Most avian veterinarians recommend a high quality, toxin-free formulated diet, preferably certified organic when possible. Supplementation may include chopped organic vegetables, and leafy greens. While many canaries can apparently live for many years on primarily seed-based diets, most veterinarians believe disease incidence is reduced with a balanced, formulated diet.

What Do Canaries Do All Day?

Canaries spend a great deal of time eating, investigating, and flying from perch to perch. For this reason, they benefit from the largest cage possible, or better yet, an aviary. Canaries readily investigate and shred green food items such as lettuce and edible herbs. Provide enrichment by hanging these items from the tops or sides of the cages, and changing them daily. Multiple, variable diameter branches are also important accessories in the enclosure.

Are Canaries Tame?

Canaries are very seldom hand reared and therefore resist handling of any kind. In fact, attempting to hold a pet canary is extremely stressful for the bird. With time, birds become acclimated to the presence of people and will sing and go about normal activities even in a busy household. Canary enclosures should be kept away from small children or pets likely to harass the birds.

How to Identify your Bird

Canaries that escape outdoors are extremely difficult to recover. However, methods of identification include leg bands and implantation of a microchip, which is possible, but challenging in a bird of this size.

Should the Wings Be Clipped?

Because canaries cannot climb around the enclosure using their beaks like parrots, the wings of a canary should never be clipped. Once clipped, the canary will have a difficult time getting to upper perches. For this reason, canary enclosures should be secure to prevent accidental escape.

What Your Veterinarian Looks for in a Healthy Canary



How to Keep Your Canary Healthy, Happy and Safe!

- ✓ Take your canary to your veterinarian immediately after purchase, then once annually for examinations.
- ✓ Provide stimulating environmental enrichment by offering greens and herbs, toys designed for very small birds, and foraging opportunities.
- ✓ Feed a fresh, high quality, toxin-free formulated diet with fresh chopped fruits and vegetables according to the manufacturer's recommendation.
- ✓ Provide clean, fresh uncontaminated drinking water and change frequently.
- ✓ Many birds enjoy bathing. Try providing a warm water bath. Canaries preferred not to be sprayed with a water bottle.
- ✓ Avoid spraying house with insecticides.

Housing for your canary should:

- ✓ be as large as possible, allowing limited flight.
- ✓ be clean, secure, and safe.
- ✓ be constructed of nontoxic materials (some cages may contain heavy metals, such as zinc).
- ✓ contain variably sized perches made of clean, nontoxic pesticide-free wood or branches.
- ✓ not include sandpaper-covered perches.
- ✓ have easy-to-clean food and water containers.
- ✓ have perches not placed directly over food or water bowls.
- ✓ offer opportunities for protected outdoor exposure to fresh air, direct sunlight and exercise.

Canaries can easily become injured if they escape from the cage. Watch out especially for:

- ✗ ceiling fans
- ✗ stove tops with hot burners, pans or skillets
- ✗ fumes from overheated non-stick cookware
- ✗ tobacco and cigarette smoke
- ✗ chocolate, avocado, salt, alcohol
- ✗ toxic houseplants
- ✗ pesticides or chemical cleaners
- ✗ dogs, cats and unsupervised children
- ✗ sources of heavy metals, such as lead or zinc (stained glass windows, pewter, some mini-blinds or linoleum)
- ✗ plug-in air fresheners
- ✗ scented candles