

# LOVEBIRDS



Companion Bird Care  
**SERIES**

## Most Common Disorders of Lovebirds

- Feather plucking and self-mutilation
- Bacterial infections, including chlamydiosis
- Circovirus
- Fungal infections

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](http://www.AAV.org) and click on "Find a Vet" or contact the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners, [www.ABVP.com/diplomate](http://www.ABVP.com/diplomate).

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720-458-4111 [www.aav.org](http://www.aav.org)

*Lovebirds (Agapornis spp.) are small colorful parrots with short tails and relatively broad bodies. Free-ranging birds are found in central and southern Africa. The species most commonly seen in captivity are peach-faced, masked and Fischer's lovebirds. The peach-faced lovebird is often regarded as the smartest of the three, but the other two have more gentle, pleasant personalities. Although color mutations are highly valued by some aviculturists, the inbreeding required to produce unusual colors has actually resulted in some negative genetic disorders, including decreased disease resistance, reduced longevity and hatching defects.*

## What to Expect from Your Lovebird

Lovebirds are intelligent, relatively nondestructive birds that can make entertaining companions for families. They are mischievous birds that like to hide, such as under paper, in shirt pockets or in long hair. They are generally poor talkers, but they can easily learn tricks.

### Vital Statistics

Body length: 5-7 inches (12-18 cm)

Body weight: 38-56 g

Age of sexual maturity: 8-12 mo

Maximum life span: 12 years

Single lovebirds in the home can be relatively quiet and may be affectionate, although some adult birds may be nippy. In a colony situation, however, lovebirds do not live up to their name,

as they are territorial and may kill new additions or weaker birds.

### Is Your Lovebird a Male or a Female?

In most lovebird species it is difficult to reliably distinguish a male from a female based on physical characteristics; therefore, laboratory methods using DNA technology may be used for sex determination. Lovebirds are prolific breeders in captivity, and the offspring are easy to hand-raise.

### What Should You Feed Your Lovebird?

For a long, healthy life, lovebirds should be fed a high quality, toxin-free formulated diet. Supplementation may include small amounts of chopped organic vegetables and fruit and whole grains.

### Are Lovebirds Tame?

Young, hand-raised lovebirds are calm and adapt readily to new surroundings and handling procedures. They should be exposed early in life to novel situations (car travel, hospital visits, multiple visitors in the household, other household pets) so that they are well adjusted to these events. Parent-raised birds are more difficult to tame, but consistent, gentle behavior modification techniques used in larger parrots will result in a bird that is more tolerant of handling.

### What Do Lovebirds Do All Day?

Because of their high intelligence, Lovebirds require a stimulating and enriching environment. Toys should be rotated frequently and include puzzle-types and toys designed to be shredded or destroyed. Toys should be “bird safe” and free of toxic metals, hooks, sharp objects or small easily consumed components. They can be taught to enjoy foraging, where food and treats are hidden in puzzle toys or other objects, such as paper cups or paper. This is an excellent way to prevent boredom. Socialized Lovebirds benefit from inclusion in a busy family’s activities in a variety of situations.

### How to Identify Your Bird

Lovebirds occasionally escape outdoors, and permanent identification may help to return birds to their owners. One method used to permanently identify your bird is implantation of a microchip, as is performed in other pets. Some birds already have leg bands for identification. Although closed leg bands seldom cause injury, some owners prefer to have them removed.

### Should the Wings Be Clipped?

The decision to clip wings or allow free flight should be made carefully. Birds allowed free flight benefit from exercise and mental stimulation; however, free flying birds may be injured by hitting windows or ceiling fans or hurt by encountering toxic materials. With careful planning and training, some birds may be allowed free flight in a safe area. The goal of clipping the wings is not to make the bird incapable of flight but to prevent it from developing rapid and sustained flight and to prevent escape. Clipping must be done carefully and tailored to each individual to prevent flight and injuries from falling.

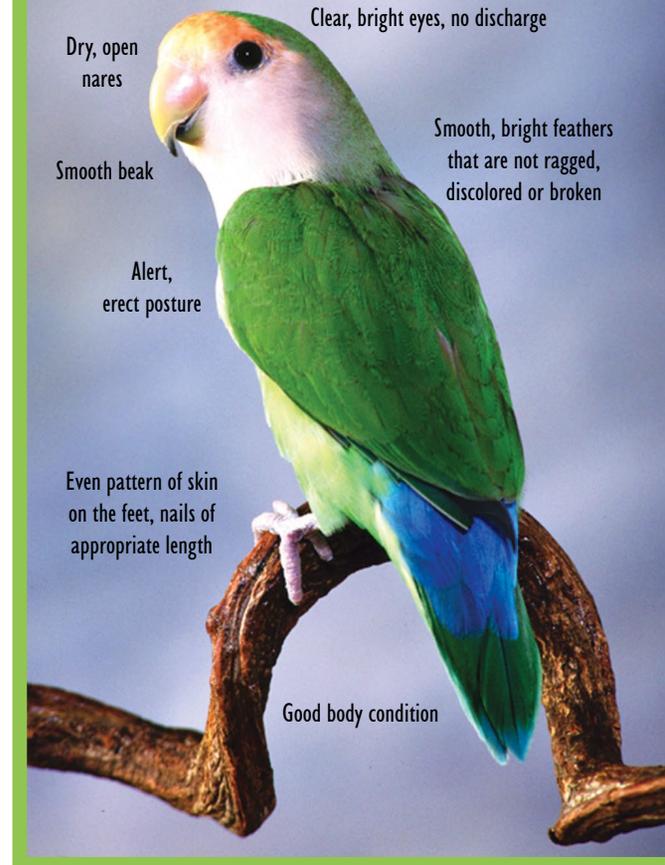
## How to Keep Your Lovebird Healthy, Happy and Safe!

- ✓ Take your lovebird to your veterinarian immediately after purchase, then once annually for examinations.
- ✓ Provide stimulating environmental enrichment by offering toys, social interaction and foraging opportunities.
- ✓ Feed a fresh, high quality, toxin-free formulated diet with fresh chopped fruits, vegetables and whole grains according to the manufacturer’s recommendation.
- ✓ Provide clean, fresh uncontaminated drinking water and change frequently. Lovebirds can be trained to use a water bottle.
- ✓ Many birds enjoy bathing. Try providing a warm water bath, or gently spraying with clean warm water daily if possible.
- ✓ Avoid spraying house with insecticides.

Housing for your lovebird should:

- ✓ be as large as possible.
- ✓ be clean, secure and safe.
- ✓ be constructed of nontoxic materials (some cages may contain toxic metals, such as zinc).
- ✓ contain variable-sized perches made of clean, nontoxic, pesticide-free wood or branches.
- ✓ 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.

## What Your Veterinarian Looks for in a Healthy Lovebird



Lovebirds are very curious and will investigate anything new in their environment. That is why it is important to prevent their access to:

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