

# PetCare™

ENSURING A HEALTHIER, LONGER LIFE FOR YOUR PET NEWS

August 2004

birds

BY CHARLOTTE REED



## GOOD Finch keeping

IT'S EASY TO GIVE  
YOUR FEATHERED  
FRIEND ALL THE  
COMFORTS OF HOME.

AS AVIAN COMPANIONS GO, the finch is pretty much ideal for many birdlovers. Found all over the world, from the deserts of Australia to the snowy lands of Siberia, these small, perching songbirds come in a variety of breeds and colors. Whether you choose a popular society or zebra finch, priced at a few dollars, or a beautiful Lady Gouldian, which can cost a few hundred dollars, there's a finch for everyone's taste.

Finches are simple to care for, too — they're not destructive either to your home or their habitat, and are happiest entertaining themselves or a finch friend with whom they share a cage. They thrive in calm, quiet (and smoke-free) homes where they're appreciated for themselves. If you're considering adopting a finch, following are a few tips for keeping your new companion healthy and happy:

- Pick out a warm, sunny, draft-free location for your bird's home. Stay away from the kitchen, where cooking and cleaning fumes may harm your pal. (Note that secondary cigarette, cigar, or pipe smoke may be lethal, as well.) Noisy or heavily trafficked areas aren't good for these birds, either. (Although energetic, they don't handle stress well.) A barking dog, a meddlesome cat, or inquisitive children who like to stick their hands in the cage will frighten your finch.
- Finches need a daily diet of primarily pelleted food, seeds, and fresh water. Avian experts recommend supplementation with seed treats, greens, eggs, vegetables, fruits, and depending on the species, even commercially packaged bugs, as well. Vitamins help maintain their good health, and a cuttlebone contributes to beak maintenance. Also, grit is essential, as it plays a role in their digestion. Make sure to ask specifically for finch grit at your local pet store, because it must be small enough for them to swallow.
- Choose a modest-sized cage that where your feathered friend can move and fly around comfortably: the longer the better, so that your bird can fly from one end to the other. "If you're serious about finch breeding, you'll want to set up a spacious outdoor aviary as well," notes Sonia Hernandez-Divers, DVM, DACZM,

of the University of Georgia, "as birds who can't fly rarely breed successfully." Make sure the spacing between the bars is right, so that your bird can't either escape or get caught between the bars. "It's important to avoid overcrowding your cages with several individuals," adds Dr. Hernandez-Divers, "as these little guys can be quite territorial and may fight

if you've put too many together in a small area."

- Line the bottom of the cage with paper towels or newsprint for easy cleaning. A few accessories will make your finch's life more entertaining. Try a variety of perches of different textures and diameters (which also keeps their feet healthy), a small nest box or gourd, and fresh greenery, which you can tie in different areas to create visual barriers between birds (but don't overdecorate).
- Wash the cage and accessories, including bowls, once a week in hot, soapy water. Rinse and dry thoroughly.

If you're looking for an easy pet who's fun to watch and pleasant to listen to, finches make great companions. They're lively birds, each with a distinct and unique personality that makes him or her a wonderful addition to one's home. For more information on finch diet, housing, and health care, be sure to consult your veterinarian and the avian specialists at your local pet-supply store.

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#### RESOURCES

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