

Lories and Lorikeets

Subfamily *Loriinae*



LIFE SPAN: 15 - 30 years

AVERAGE SIZE: 6-15 inches; 50-300 grams

PET SUPPLIES PLUS
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written by an expert in the pet care industry and approved by a board-certified avian veterinarian

the information on this care sheet is a basic overview and not a substitute for veterinary care. For more information and to find a qualified avian veterinarian, go to www.AAV.org.

WILD HISTORY: Forests, mangroves and eucalyptus groves of Australia, Indonesia, New Guinea, Pacific Islands, Philippines, and Solomon Islands. Lories and lorikeets are not sexually dimorphic, which means males and females are not visually different. A proper DNA test by a qualified avian veterinarian can tell you whether your pet is male or female. Common available pet species are from the genus *Eos* (red), *Trichoglossus* (rainbow), *Lorius* (chattering, black cap), *Psitteuteles* (Goldie's), and *Pseudeos* (dusky).

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: All species of lorikeets and lories are strikingly beautiful birds with colorful and shiny plumage. Lorikeets are smaller, have a long pointed tail; body color is generally green with patches of red and yellow. Lories are larger and heavier bodied, have a short, blunt tail; body color is generally red with patches of yellow, purple and green. Lories and lorikeets have unusual "paintbrush" tongues. Also called "honey eaters," the birds use these special tongues to get nectar and pollen, which is the mainstay of their diet, out of flowers.

Tropical Lories/Lorikeets - The larger, tropical lories/lorikeets are often better "talkers" than the smaller, Australian species. The tropical species are also known for their excellent mimicry abilities. They are extremely intelligent, energetic, boisterous and quite loud. These species are not recommended as apartment dwellers. They require keepers who are patient and committed.

Australian Lories/Lorikeets - The smaller, Australian species are relatively quiet; most can be kept in apartment settings. They are sweet, charming, loving birds that make excellent family pets.

NORMAL PARROT BEHAVIOR AND INTERACTION:

Parrots are flock-oriented animals, and they do well with other birds in the home to communicate with. However, you and your family become part of your bird's flock as well. Some parrots often get labeled as "one person birds." Although this may sometimes seem to be the case, many members of the household can have a good relationship with the family bird. Because most parrots mate for life in the wild, it is natural to choose one person to have that closest relationship with.

Every parrot, even within the same species, has his or her own personality. Some parrots are very bold and interactive, and some are subdued and shy. The more you work with your parrot, the more comfortable it will become and the more his or her own personality will emerge.

DIET: Lories and lorikeets have a very specialized diet. They do not and should not eat seed. In their natural, wild environment, lory and lorikeet diets consist mainly of flowers, nectar, pollen and fruit. In captivity, as pets, owners must replicate this natural diet as closely as possible. A proper lory/lorikeet diet consists of two main parts: high quality, balanced nectar and fresh fruits and vegetables.

Nectar "powders" and wet mixes are available commercially and must be fed daily as an important part of the healthy diet. These mixes consist of nectars, pollen, ground fruits and vegetables and a proper balance of vitamins and minerals. This mix must be replaced several times a day, as it can harbor harmful bacteria which can make your bird sick. This nectar should be the mainstay of your bird's diet.

To supplement the nectar, fresh foods can be offered. Fruits to consider are apples, grapes, figs, kiwi, pomegranates, papaya and grapes. Vegetables include corn-on-the-cob, spinach, beans, parsley, broccoli, and carrots. Edible flowers include pansies, nasturtiums, roses, hibiscus, marigolds, and dandelions. Other food items to offer in small amounts include: pasta, rice, toast, eggs, mild cheese, mashed potato, chicken bones and other meats.

All foods can be sliced, diced or cubed into bite-sized pieces. All fruits, vegetables and flowers should be pesticide free (organic). Also provide untreated, fresh fruit tree branches with flowers and buds, such as from apple and pear trees when available.

SUPPLEMENTS: If your bird is eating a balanced diet, the only supplement that you will need is calcium. Calcium can usually be offered in the form of a cuttlebone or mineral block. Do not use gravel or grit as it can cause impactions. For optimal calcium metabolism, your bird will need some UVB exposure for at least 3-4 hours a day. Careful outdoor sun exposure or indoor UV lighting is recommended (see our **UV Lighting** handout).

WATER: Clean, fresh water must always be available and should be changed daily. All water should ideally be free of fluorine, chlorine and heavy metals. We recommend that you use unflavored bottled drinking water or bottled natural spring water. If tap water is used, you should treat it with a water conditioner. If you do not want to chemically de-chlorinate the water, you can leave an open container of tap water out for at least 24 hours with exposure to ultraviolet light. Do not use distilled water, which can cause severe medical problems, since it lacks minerals that are essential to important body functions.

Because your bird will often even bathe or dunk food in its water, it must be checked/changed several times a day. It is recommended that the bowl be wiped clean with a paper towel at every change to prevent a slimy film (bacteria) from collecting on the inside of the bowl. Thoroughly wash the bowl with a mild dishwashing detergent and water at least once a day.

HOUSING & ENVIRONMENT: Lories and lorikeets need a clean, warm, mentally stimulating environment. Select a

36"x24"x24" powder-coated or stainless steel parrot cage, free of rust and chips; with bar spacing between 1/2 and 5/8 inches. The cage should be placed in a family-centered room where the bird will feel like a part of the "flock." Since these birds can be extremely messy with their droppings - often "shooting" them out behind them - it is highly recommended to keep them against a solid wall. Consider placing plexiglass around the lower perimeter of the cage to keep the wet droppings from exiting the cage area. A carpeted floor under a lorikeet/lori cage will be ruined quickly. If the room has carpeting, a suitable under-cage covering of plastic or tile would be a good idea. Avoid drafty areas and any placement that will get too much direct sun for any portion of the day. If your bird spends time out of its cage, make sure that any ceiling fans are off. Do not place your bird's cage in the kitchen, as cooking fumes and even a small amount of smoke can be fatal. Average room temperature will be fine for your bird, not to exceed 80 degrees. Be careful of drafts from air conditioning, especially when bathing and misting.

Perches of varying materials and types should be included in the cage, such as wood dowel, natural branch type, cotton rope or a cement perch. Having different sizes will exercise the feet and prevent sores and foot-related health issues. We do not recommend sandpaper covered perches as they are too abrasive for bird feet.

At least three clean bowls should be ready for use: one for fresh water, one for nectar and one for fresh foods.

Use newspapers to line the bottom of the cage. It is easy to change and you can monitor your bird's feces daily. We do not recommend sandpaper floor paper or corn cob bedding. Corn cob can be ingested and cause obstructions and can grow molds on moist foods and feces.

We recommend against using mite protectors due to the potential for respiratory irritation (fortunately mites are not common in parrots). In addition, a smoke-free household is best for bird and owner!

Your bird may appreciate a cage cover for nighttime. The cover can block out any extraneous light and create a more secure sleeping place. Be careful not to use any fabrics for your cover that your bird might catch its claws or beak in, or that it might pull strings from and ingest.

ENRICHMENT: In the wild, parrots spend most of their day from morning until night flying and foraging for food. Providing pet parrots toys to play with is essential for their mental health. Purchase lory/lorikeet size-appropriate toys, and remember that parrot toys are meant to be destroyed! Parrots enjoy shiny, wooden, cotton rope, and plastic toys. It is very important to purchase toys made specifically for parrots as they are much more likely to be safer in construction and material.

Several types of "play places" should be available for safe supervised, out-of-cage playtime. A play gym and portable T-stand can allow your bird to spend time with you in different rooms. Supervised flying and walking/climbing is an excellent daily physical requirement.

RECOMMENDED SUPPLIES:

- Cage
- Perches
- Dishes
- Toys
- Play gym or T-stand
- Misting bottle and/or crock for birdbath

- Nail clipper & styptic powder
- Nectar diet
- Treats
- Calcium supplement
- Fluorescent UVB Bulb and housing
- Cage cover

CAGE MAINTENANCE: All lories/lorikeets can be very messy birds to keep. Because of their specialized diet of fruit and nectars, their droppings are wet, messy and wonderfully colorful. The cage and surrounding area must be cleaned daily. Check the metal parts & bars of your bird's cage periodically for chipped paint and rust, which can cause serious health issues if your bird chews or swallows any flaked pieces.

The entire cage should be cleaned thoroughly at least once every month with:

- A mild dishwashing liquid in warm water
- Vinegar & water (1:8) or bleach and warm water (1:32)
- Cage "furniture" should also be scrubbed clean with the same dilution.
- Rinse off all soap and bleach thoroughly with plain water before re-introducing your pet to its enclosure.
- NEVER MIX VINEGAR AND BLEACH - IT CREATES A TOXIC SOLUTION

GROOMING & HYGIENE: All birds should be gently misted with a water bottle dedicated to this use only. Some birds enjoy going in the shower with their owners. In addition to misting, a crock/bowl for bird bath should be offered to your bird at least twice weekly.

Be sure to take your bird to your avian veterinarian for regular nail and wing trims. Because lories and lorikeets are all different, their wings may be trimmed conservatively to avoid injury from falling or more aggressively to avoid escape. *Never* use styptic powder on your bird's skin-nails only!

SIGNS OF A HEALTHY BIRD: A healthy bird should be perky, active and alert with bright, clear eyes, and nostrils. You should observe your bird eating and drinking throughout the day. Your bird should appear well groomed with neat, bright feathers. The feathers should be mostly smoothed to the body at rest - not continually fluffed. The feet and legs should be smooth and free of lumps, scabs and rough scales. Parrots vocalize regularly with chirps, clicks, whistles and learned words. Your bird should be interested in communicating, but may be shy or intimidated around new people or in new environments. A healthy bird is confident and inquisitive, although cautious and aware as well. We recommend your bird be seen by an avian vet for yearly health exams.

SOME COMMON HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT REQUIRE VETERINARY EVALUATION INCLUDE:

- Fluffed feathers, missing patches of feathers, feathers being purposely plucked.
- Evidence that your bird has stopped grooming.
- Bird sitting still and low on perch with a puffed-up appearance, drooping wings; may also stay at bottom of cage.
- Beak swelling or unusual marks on cere.
- Nasal discharge, eye discharge, wheezing or coughing.
- Any change in stools including color or consistency.
- Loss of appetite.
- Favoring of one foot, holding a wing differently, presence of any blood.