

# African Grey Parrot Care Sheet



## Biological Facts

- African Grey Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*); two subspecies
  - Congo: larger body, light-grey coloration, all-black beak, and bright red tail feathers
  - Timneh: smaller body, darker-grey coloration, flesh-colored top half of beak, and dark maroon tail feathers
- Weight: 330-500 gm
- Young birds have dark grey irises that turn pale yellow at 1 year of age
- Sexual maturity: 4-6 years
- Avg. life span: 25-30 years
- Maximum recorded life span: 50+ years
- Origins: West and Central Africa

## Behavior

- Frequently bonds with one family member, rejecting others.
- Often fearful or intolerant of strangers.
- Parent-raised African grey chicks are considered to be better adjusted than those raised entirely by humans. Baby birds that receive human handling while still in the nest tend to show fewer behavioral problems (e.g. feather picking, fearfulness, aggression) at maturity than those that do not.
- Tamed birds readily adapt to new surroundings and activities; expose early to daily activities in your household as well as to other pets
- Are intelligent, curious, and love to explore their surroundings.
- Need environmental enrichment, interesting toys, and foraging exercises to reduce the chance of behavioral problems.

## Diet

- Wild African grey parrots feed on a variety of fruits, nuts, and vegetables.
- Seed-based diets are not recommended as they permit pet birds to select an imbalanced diet from what is offered.
- Formulated diets (“pellets” or “crumbles”) provide more complete and balanced nutrition, do not allow selective feeding, and should comprise about 75% of the diet
- Dark leafy greens, vegetables, and fruits can make up 20-25% of diet
- Treats should be limited to only 5% of the diet
- Clean, fresh water should be provided daily

## Environment

- Enclosures should be as large as possible, such that the bird is able to fully extend it’s wings and flap without touching the cage walls

- Cage should be clean, secure, safe and constructed of durable, non-toxic materials
- Perches should be of variable widths, heights, and textures. Also provide a concrete perch to help to maintain the toenails.
- Avoid placing perches directly over food or water to prevent contamination
- Access to natural light is preferred, and supplemental UV light may be recommended to treat or prevent feather picking or hypocalcemia.
- Avoid drafty areas.
- Parrots should stay in their cage or a “bird safe” room when they are not under direct supervision.
- Birds with unrestricted access to the home are at risk for accidents such as toxin ingestion, electrocution, pet attacks, and drowning.

### **Preventive Care**

- Physical examinations every 6-12 months
  - Consult a veterinarian with experience in avian medicine if you have any questions or concerns about your bird’s health.
- Annual fecal examination for parasites, yeast, and bacteria
- Vaccination for Polyomavirus, as directed by your veterinarian
- Routine blood testing
- Wing, nail trimming as needed

### **Common Medical Disorders**

- Behavioral problems (e.g. feather picking, fearfulness, aggression)
- Respiratory diseases
- Hypocalcemia syndrome
- Circovirus (PBFD virus)
- Nasal blockages (bacterial, fungal, secondary to malnutrition)
- Proventricular dilatation disease (PDD)