

Petware House

Your Neighborhood Pet Store

Yellow Canary

Serinus canaries domesticus

CARE SHEET

Canaries are well known for their beauty and varied colors. These members of the finch family have been domesticated since the 1400's. Male canaries are popular for their sweet singing. Canaries do well when kept singly or in a male/female or female/female pairs.



Average Size 3-4 inches in length.

Life span 10+ years with proper care.

Feeding Specialized pelleted diets are highly recommended and should consist of 60%-70% of the diet. If your bird is used to a seed diet, convert to pellets gradually; fresh pellets or seeds and fresh, clean, chlorine free water should always be available.

Give fresh fruits and vegetables daily; discard uneaten food before it spoils; finches appreciate quality and variety in their food.

Housing A cage approximately 24" W x 14" D x 18" H, with metal bars spaced no greater than 3/8" apart, makes a good home for up to 3 finches; as with all animals, it is best to provide the largest habitat possible.

Perches should be at least 3" long and 1/2" in diameter; a variety of perch sizes and materials to exercise feet and help prevent arthritis is recommended. A metal grate over the droppings tray will keep the bird away from droppings; line the droppings tray with cage paper or appropriate substrate for easier cleaning. To avoid contamination, do not place food or water containers under perches.

Maintenance Provide filtered, chlorine-free, lukewarm water regularly for bathing and remove the water when done; as an alternative, mist the bird with water or a grooming spray. Nails should be trimmed by a qualified person to prevent injury to the bird.

Clean and disinfect the cage and perches regularly; replace substrate or cage liner weekly or more often if needed; replace food and water daily.

Replace perches, dishes and toys when worn or damaged. Always wash your hands after touching your bird and cage.

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Temps Birds acclimate well to average household temperatures; be cautious of extreme temperature change; cage should be placed off the floor in an area that is well-lit and away from drafts.

Humidity No special requirements

Lighting Well lit rooms.

Water & Accessories

Install a bird bath, food and water dishes and a variety of perches. Also include toys for your canary to play with. Don't forget about adding treats and grit as well.

BASIC REPRODUCTIVE INFORMATION

Consider canaries if you want to raise pets in your own home. Unlike dogs and cats, there is no surplus of unwanted cage birds. If you decide to breed canaries, my best advice is to read a book about breeding them because there is more you should know than can be covered in an article. However, I will go over some basics.

Obviously, you need to start with a male and a female. This is not always simple because it is difficult to determine the sex of canaries by appearance. Most males sing and most females don't, but there are exceptions both ways. The only way to be 100% sure is to buy older birds from a breeder who has already bred them once. Ask for a "proven" hen who was a good mother and you will avoid disappointment.

Canaries are only fertile when the length of the day is increasing to about 12 hours. This naturally happens in the spring. The birds must also have adequate nutrition which should include animal protein such as hard-boiled eggs. It is crucial to provide a cuttlebone or similar source of calcium for the hen to eat.

Canaries are territorial and each pair needs its own cage. If the hen fights with the male, she is not ready and they should be separated. For convenience, many breeders use a double cage with a removable wire partition. When you observe them "kissing" through the bars, you can remove the partition and see if they are compatible.

When the hen is ready to lie, she will want to build a nest. Buy an open (uncovered) 4" nest cup from a pet shop and hang it in a top corner of the cage. Provide nesting material for her to line the nest with. Pet shops sell commercial material for canary nests, or you can shred burlap or even toilet paper.

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The hen lays one egg a day until 4 or 5 are laid. Then she sits on them for 2 weeks and rarely leaves the nest. When the chicks hatch, you must provide food rich in egg protein for the parents to feed them. Greens such as broccoli and sprouts are also very important.

The chicks leave the nest about 18 days after hatching. The parents will feed them for another week or so. Then the hen will want to start a new family and may attack the old one. A double cage becomes useful again because you can separate the chicks from the parents. The father can feed them through the bars while the hen lays another clutch.

By the time they are 4 weeks old, the chicks must learn to eat on their own. Provide them with the same egg food the parents fed them. Also prepare softened seed by soaking it for 48 hours. Rinse the soaked seed daily. Start an assembly line so that every day you will have seed that has been soaked for 2 days. Do not give them the normal dry canary seed mix until they are at least 6 weeks old.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Male canaries are known for their singing; females tend to chirp rather than sing; males may stop singing during their annual molt, this is normal. Canaries do not require much social interaction with humans and prefer not to be handled; they also need room to fly in their cages.

Male canaries should not be housed together; they may perceive each other as a threat; males kept in cages with mirrors may not sing.