

## FEEDING & CARING FOR BUDGIES



A BOOKLET OF USEFUL NOTES FROM GARRY MILLS - OWNER AND PROFESSIONAL BREEDER OF 'JUST BUDGIES' AT WHISPERING PINES AVIARY AND KYM HAMILTON – AVIAN VETERINARY NURSE - (BOOKLET VERSION 09/07/23)

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First, here is a testimonial from Veterinary Nurse Kym Hamilton – she says... “These notes are all about EDUCATION; we usually say that the worst information you can get is from Google, backyard breeders, pet shops and forums on Facebook – so few of these people are true experts - It’s refreshing to see that ‘Just Budgies’ at Whispering Pines Aviary, are taking expert advice on board as most breeders instantly take offence from any suggestions made to them!!! Garry, I will forward your name and telephone number to Currumbin Valley Avian and Exotics as we often get asked but very rarely recommend because so many breeders are doing it just for the money and don’t care for the bird’s long-term well-being. The other reason we don’t like to recommend breeders is that 95% of them feed the incorrect diet and give the customer very little aftercare information. YOU Garry, at Whispering Pines Aviary are the exception - I’m so thrilled to meet a breeder that genuinely cares.”

**“Thank you so much for that Kym; that makes us feel very proud and humble – We maintain our 100% five-star review rating on Google and Facebook by caring intensely about what we do and by treating our budgies not just like birds, but by treating them with the same love and attention that we would give to any of our family members”.**

Garry – The owner of Just Budgies at Whispering Pines Aviary & Budgie Whisperer

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Now let's look at those 11 points above in more detail....

## 1) Providing A Partner For Your Budgie To Socialise With

### **THIS SECTION IS SO IMPORTANT READ IT AND LET YOUR HEART DO THE RIGHT THING**

Over the many years we have been breeding budgies, we have heard of budgies in people's homes that are reportedly happy to be by themselves, we can never validate that because that is the owner's opinion, not the budgies. However, for every one of those customers that are happy to have their budgie in a 'lone' situation, we hear from fifty that have budgies that are lethargic, non-active, non-verbal and just plain lonely by themselves. Many lone budgies die far too early, trying hard to be what their masters demand of them and suffering the mental stress of being alone when their owners are not in or not available.

Some species of birds like parrots, can tolerate and even benefit from a one-to-one relationship with human beings. However, budgies are different because of the communal flock nature of budgies and their **natural instinct** to socialise **AS A FLOCK**.

Just recently, I challenged two separate misguided customers to bring their so-called 'happy' lone budgies down to our aviary so that we can both watch what happens when the lone budgie is introduced to others of its own species. In both cases, the customer was brought close to tears as they watched their lone budgie interact and befriend other budgies and act in ways their owners had never seen before. Both customers left with a new partner for their budgie, fully bonded, not by us, but by their own budgie's instinct to bond with another of their own kind.

Some people incorrectly fear that if their budgie bonds to another budgie, it will not bond with its owners. Let me give you the facts. Budgies will still bond with their owners regardless of the number of birds that are in the cage. In our aviary, it's not unusual for us to have 4-6 birds sitting on our shoulders when we go into the aviary each day; we have not gone out of our way to bond with them. They just recognise that we feed them twice a day, change their water twice a day, clean their nest boxes every day and bring them treats usually in the form of wild grass or fresh chopped veggies! They bond with us because we share our love with them. Budgies are not as small-minded and selfish as some humans who say that a budgie can only bond with a person!

To try and explain **why** a budgie **needs** to bond with its own kind.... in the wild budgie world, the flock survives because of the sheer size of the flock, socialising and bonding are part of their natural instinct for survival. By themselves, they would not survive for an hour as predators would pick them off. If you go to the areas where budgies live in the wild, you may see 10,000 budgies and 10 trees, and it is not unusual to see all 10,000 budgies in the **same** tree, by choice, for comfort, for safety, and survival. It has been bred into them over thousands of years, that natural instinct to bond and colonise for the survival of their species. For anybody to believe that with that level of ability to bond to thousands of their flock, they can only bond to a human if they are by themselves is a little short of ridiculous.

Within your home, the bigger the flock, the better and if you only have the space for two budgies and **as long as you can fulfil and maintain their needs**, they will be very happy to bond with you. The flock does not need to be large, except in VERY exceptional circumstances; it **should be more than one**. Lone budgies suffer from mental fatigue when left by themselves, and that is usually evident in their pacing up and down, over squawking, which is a sign of stress or sometimes and more often, the opposite, their 'quietness and stillness', a sign of stress caused by enforced solitude, it also shows in their longevity (the number of years they live). Happily bonded budgies can live for 10-12 years and up to 15 years in circumstances where their living conditions are exceptional. A lone budgie rarely lives for more than 4-5 years and often less! Owners of lone budgies commonly report that their gorgeous budgie they were so bonded to died when it was 5 years old for no apparent reason. That's the problem; you can't see a broken heart and a broken spirit.

A lone budgie can be 'apparently' perfectly happy when the owner is there to stimulate and participate in providing company for the budgie, and if the owner is there most of the time then we absolutely accept that this can sometimes work. However, we would still say to these owners, "[Stand your lone budgie in its cage next to another cage with another budgie, give them an hour by themselves and then go take a look to see if there is any attempt for your lone budgie to communicate with the budgie in the next cage. If the lone budgie shows no signs of interest in the other budgie and sits with his back turned to the other, you probably have a happy lone budgie](#)". It's a great test to make you realise that we owe more to our beautiful budgies than to commit them to a life of loneliness and solitude!

Generally, what you will see will be interaction, communication, a want and a need to be near each other. When a customer brings a lone budgie to us for partnering, we put their cage next to a cage with 10-12 other budgies all flying, all eating, all very active, and all very verbal. We then put the lone budgie straight in with them! What do you think would happen? Will there be a bloodbath, will there be violence, will there be aggression?

Let me tell you, we have never seen that.... What happens is that the lone budgie will usually sit and watch for a while. Then you see the head tilting of the lone budgie as it tries to work out the conflict between its natural instinct to bond to the flock against its recent lifetime experience of being alone. So far, with the many hundreds of 'introductions' we have completed, we have never had a failure; some take less than an hour before they find a place in the flock, and others take several hours, but the colony instinct always kicks in at the end of the day. We then watch and see which budgie the lone budgie picks as its partner, isn't that just the right thing to do?

Often when we sell a budgie to a customer who has a lone budgie, they report back to us that after they introduced the second bird, they see an amazing improvement in the general happiness of their existing budgie. We have hundreds of lovely photographs from happy customers proud of their new family members. The advantages don't just stop there, the lone budgie's general health improves as a bonus for the owner and the budgies generally also become far more entertaining and fun to watch.

If you have a lone budgie, we will give you all the advice you need to make a successful introduction to a new partner.

Always remember that budgies must interact with a human or another budgie for many hours a day. That does not mean that the bird has to be on your hand for that period of time, but it does involve you having you talk to it, walk around with it on your shoulder, offer things like small toys for it to investigate etc.; these are all ways of interacting. Right there in that last sentence is the problem, if you only have time to play with your budgie for a few minutes a day because you are off doing other things to occupy **your** time, what does your lone budgie do for the rest of **their** time? If you have a lone budgie and you cannot give it several hours a day, a partner for the budgie will do it for you and you will come home to two happy budgies that want to share their happiness with you.

That is why budgies need partners because, in practice, most people simply don't have those hours every day to spend with their budgies! The second budgie is the simple solution.

There is an exception to the rule and that is for people who buy a lone budgie as a companion and who have got all day to give attention to that lone budgie. In this case, the lone budgie may well have its time well occupied and will also be doing a worthwhile job at the same time by being a loving companion. It can also be an option where the owners are working from home and are there as a constant companion for the budgie.

We sell budgies every week to people who now work from home. There is nothing more boring than having to work on a computer all day and having two chirpy friends with you that love your desk, sit on your shoulder or top of your computer screen and chirp away to you while you are working, is both rewarding, comforting and mentally satisfying in every way.

If you already have a lone budgie and are not with it all day, at Whispering Pines Aviary, we offer a free budgie matching service where you can bring your budgie and introduce it to potential partners. We believe in letting your budgie make its own choice in life partners and it gives us great pleasure to hand you back two budgies that will be friends for life. You only pay for the new budgie; the service is free.

If you have a mature budgie that has lost a partner, **PLEASE** do not leave it too long before you introduce them to another partner; even in old age, budgies will re-bond quickly due to their instinctive social behaviour. A budgie that has lost its life partner can and often does grieve to the point of losing appetite and eventual death. Get them introduced again as quickly as possible. We keep a supply of mature birds specifically for those who have lost a partner.

When introducing a new partner, you will normally find it better to introduce one of the opposite sex. They tend to bond much quicker and it's lovely to see the budgie **you** love find its **own** love with a partner of its own species. It won't detract from their love of you and under all normal circumstances, they will not breed if there is no nest box provided.

In our opinion, the golden rule is, unless you can be with your budgie all day, **PLEASE** get it a friend – you will see the happiness in the birds and you will be very glad you did the right thing. If you have a lone budgie and you have the time to give your budgie all the time it needs and it appears happy and contented, there is no reason to change anything. Be proud of yourself for giving your budgie that much love.

If you are starting off with budgies for the first time, please buy two or more and experience the real pleasure of having 'heavens angels' entertaining you, performing acrobatics for you, showing off for you and giving you every ounce of love that you give them.

We do understand that money may not be available for two budgies to start off with and that may have an influence on your decision to buy just one. If this is the case, please consider using a credit card to afford the second one or save until you can afford two – you will be so pleased you did when you see the happy couple entertaining you.

One last important point and this is very important, if after everything we have said, you still prefer to start with a single budgie, **please take your time to select one that is outgoing and lively in its character. A boy would be preferable as they tend to be slightly more dominant and this helps with the budgie's transition to lone life. A mature budgie of say 30-40 weeks will also have a much better chance of making the transition to lone life successfully.** In a selection of 100 + budgies, there is usually a couple that stands out with their character and level of confidence. The quiet one in the corner may look very cute and be a great choice to go with a partner, but they do not do well alone and usually become very lonely very quickly. This is just another reason to make sure that you buy from an aviary where you have the widest choice available and certainly not less than 500!

## 2) Where To Buy Quality Hand Tamed Budgies

You have a wide choice of where to buy your new budgie family from, but you need to be careful; a mistake in your choice of **where** you buy can leave you with very bad memories!

Many breeders dispose of their unwanted or substandard stock in the pet market. You should be very careful and fully aware that a cheap budgie from an unknown background could cost you \$100's in vet bills - so how can you avoid that situation? Firstly....

**Never buy a budgie without seeing the situation in which the budgie has been bred!**

Read that line again – This is very important! **You must inspect the aviary and facilities of the breeder.** is it spotlessly clean, is it protected from the elements, do the birds have good lighting and natural light, are the facilities thoroughly cleaned every day and do they provide good food, clean water and have medical help on hand when needed? Is there good ventilation, are the floors and walls and wire cages cleaned every day? We are not talking about inspecting the cage in a shop or one that has been presented to you in a cage on a front porch, it means inspecting the cages and aviary **WHERE THE BUDGIES HAVE BEEN BRED AND WHERE THEY ARE CURRENTLY BREEDING.**

Do yourself a huge favour here; if you cannot see where they have been bred – move on – buy elsewhere. If the facilities are not impeccable and up to this standard, then move on – if you are not able to see where the budgies have been bred, move on! look elsewhere for the sake of your budgies and the long-term protection of your pocket. **You should never settle for second best when there is no need to!** Poor quality budgies come from poor quality aviaries, don't think you will be the lucky one to find a 'diamond in the rough', buy from somewhere where they are **all** diamonds! Don't be tempted by the advert for the low-cost budgie, it is likely to cost you a fortune very quickly and the heartache accompanying the care and loss of a sick budgie can be devastating for you and your family.

Another very important point is if you buy your budgies from a 'free flying' aviary and intend to keep them in a confined cage, just consider what that does to the mental condition of the budgie. Imagine this, you are free, you roam free, you have choices, you can choose your surroundings and what you do each day. Budgies in a 'free flying' aviary have similar choices and if they are not 'cage conditioned', they may react badly when suddenly confined into a cage. In our aviary, most of our breeding is done in cages and we use a standard 78x45x45cm cage (per pair) that gives enough room for the parents to fly and for the babies to experience their first flights and learn to self-feed. In our free-flying aviary, we breed mainly for customers with aviaries and for other breeders who look to us for new external stock to introduce new bloodlines into their own aviaries. More importantly, we breed to produce our own future breeding stock ensuring that we know the history and quality of the budgies we are breeding from. Aviary-bred babies do not transition well to smaller-sized cages **unless properly and professionally conditioned over several weeks.**

When we need to cage condition our baby budgies, we do so after they have been out of the nest box for 7-10 days at about 8 weeks old (as soon as they are free feeding and flying) by placing them in a 76x45x45cm cage with 8-12 other budgies, they can learn to socialise which is so important for budgies that will become pets. It also allows us to assess their character and complete our hand-taming with them.

Budgie's characters are as varied as human characters. They can be lively, quiet, romantic, fun, acrobatic and just plain entertaining to watch. Which character suits you? That is one of the reasons why we say, 'you need to have 100 plus to choose from; you need to watch them and select the character that suits you'! However, be aware that the character you see in a cage can change when you get it home. Different surroundings, different faces, different foods, and different partners can all affect the personality of budgies in just the same way that it can and does with humans.

Please do not be tempted to buy budgies under 9 weeks old; they are not mature enough to leave their family flock and not old enough to transition to their new life. 9-15 weeks old is ideal as they will be stronger, more confident and more entertaining.

Do not be tempted to buy budgies that are quiet and sitting in the corner when the rest are playing; a quiet budgie can be a sign that all is not well and quite apart from anything else, will probably not have the character to be able to give you the love and attention that a budgie should do.

Never be tempted to buy a budgie from the nest box to hand-feed yourself. That is the budgie parent's responsibility. Budgies should never be used as a pawn to satisfy your need to nurture. Hand-feeding budgies is dangerous and rarely successful unless you have many years of experience in this field. The mortality rate is just too high. Let Budgie's parents do the parenting!

The above paragraphs in this section are the main reasons why we **strongly** suggest that you **never** buy from any establishment where you cannot see the breeding facilities. You simply cannot tell where the budgies have originated from and what conditions they have been bred in. Pet shops buy in low-cost budgies that they can sell cheaply and because of the low price that they pay for the birds (often only \$10 - \$15 each), they tend only to be offered birds that

the breeder does not want to keep, or have been unable to sell themselves. It is often breeders that have aviaries in extremely poor conditions that cannot allow budgie buyers to see that end up selling to pet shops.

For the same reasons, beware of amateur breeders who have bred a couple of budgies 'for fun' in the backyard; they may have cramped small cages where the birds cannot fly and will offer you a lack of choice in colours and temperament. You may not be able to view the conditions they have been bred in as they will probably be presented in a small cage for you to view to stop you from seeing the breeding facilities. Don't limit your choice; if the seller can't offer you at least 100 babies for you to choose your perfect baby budgie from, along with a full inspection of the breeding facility, **move on – look elsewhere**. Selecting your baby is not a race; take your time; you will know when you visit the right place to buy from – **immediately – it's obvious**.

**Quality aviary facilities stand out; they are welcoming to you as a customer, and they are run by educated people with experience and knowledge which they offer freely both at the time of purchase and ongoing for the future; if you experience a problem, they are there to help with advice given with patience and that help should be ongoing for as long as is needed.**

Make sure that the budgies you are looking at are hand tame (unless of course you are going to put them into an aviary and you are not going to handle them), most people cannot provide the correct training to hand tame a budgie and even if they manage it, it may take a very long time. If you are going to handle them and let them out of their cage inside your home, make sure the bird will sit on **your** hand and shoulder and that they will try to 'step up' from one finger to another; they may not be perfect straight away as you will be a stranger to them, but make sure they are attempting to step up so that they will then be happy to step up thereafter as they bond with you.

Baby budgies are not always the best choice for everybody; baby budgies are immature in their character as well as their years. There are distinct advantages to a 4-6-month-old young budgie as it will have developed character, you can tell its gender and it will have lost most or all of its baby fears and inhibitions. They are bold, brave and can be **much** easier to handle, train and bond with, so take advice from your aviary and look at their range of mature young budgies before automatically choosing babies.

Your supplier should be happy to help with advice on the budgie and the human bonding process. They should be happy to spend time with you to show you how tame the budgies are and how **you** can take over the best friend role. It is quite usual for us to spend an hour with each of our customers and we do that for three very good reasons. **Firstly**, for the sake of our budgies, we want to see our babies happy and contented in their new home. **Secondly**, to see happy customers who have made the right choices and decisions. **Thirdly**, for the five-star rating we receive from all of our customers!

In summary, at 'Just Budgies' at Whispering Pines Aviary, we recommend buying your budgies from a quality professional and well-educated establishment and not a pet shop or amateur set-up. Does that sound eminently sensible? Budgies like the hand-tame ones below are always available from 'Just Budgies' and with a choice of 100-150 to choose from in every colour – why would you take a chance of going anywhere else?

And if you think that these photos look fabulous, they are just quick snaps; they are not posed, altered or played with or 'Photoshopped'; they are just beautiful budgies in their own right... and if you think they are cute and beautiful, wait till you see the other 100 plus!











At 'Just Budgies', we will hand-tame a budgie for you that you have purchased elsewhere **BUT** we charge \$29 to do it and so buying a cheap budgie that is not hand tame is not such a bargain, is it? If you then factor in the free treatments, wing feather trimming, full back up and other benefits you get with all Whispering Pines budgies, then what we charge for our babies at just \$65 each is quite a bargain!

Look at this another way, you think nothing of spending an extra \$20-\$30 for toys and 'cage decorations' for your baby budgies, so spend that money to ensure you start off with beautiful, quality, hand-tame, healthy budgies. Does that make sense to you? It should do – it is common sense really. Start off with quality beautiful budgies that your friends and family will be envious of. Budgies are one of the most loved small pets in the world, give them the respect they deserve and they will love you for years to come.

The backup you receive from Just Budgies at Whispering Pines Aviary is second to none. However, we do not have a crystal ball and although we take every precaution to ensure that our budgies are treated, healthy and ready to go, should you ever encounter a condition that we just could not have foreseen, in just the same way that humans occasionally have a problem that cannot be seen, let us know immediately. It is quite likely that we have a solution for you.

Budgies are quite remarkable at covering up any issues they may have by fluffing up their feathers which makes them look completely normal and by the time that a problem is evident with the bird possibly looking quiet, shabby, dejected or down at the bottom of the cage, there is little time to treat the budgie before it becomes too ill to treat successfully.

It is therefore of the utmost importance that if you notice your budgie is unwell, seek advice immediately and do not leave it. We are on hand to take calls if a budgie is sick and will move heaven and earth to get your budgie back to health; even if we have not supplied the budgie in the first place, we care that much about these gorgeous creatures. If you suspect that your budgie is not acting or looking normal, act at the earliest opportunity.

Another point I would like to cover is selecting budgies if you intend to breed. Please do not make the mistake of buying birds that are advertised as 'proven breeding pairs'. Whilst that may sound attractive at first as they have been 'proven', firstly, you do not know if that is true; secondly, why would the seller be selling a 'proven breeding pair' if they were producing lovely babies, and thirdly, it will almost certainly not be the two you would have chosen to put together to be your own breeding pair if you had a choice of 100 plus to choose from!

Here at Whispering Pines Aviary, we are happy to give our customers all the help they need to successfully breed budgies. It is not that difficult but there are a few hidden traps for those that attempt to breed without doing their research first.

If you intend to breed, firstly select birds of a known age group and the ideal is 9 - 15 months old. Select the colours you like depending on the results you are looking for; select for quality, stature, colour, character and any other quality that you feel is important to you. A good aviary will help you with this as we do with our customers.

Do not just go for the cheap bargain or give away budgies and expect to get great results; you almost certainly will not. Go for the best you can afford and expect to pay \$45-\$65 per bird and more if the budgies are of 'special or interesting quality' like 'top draw' birds or rainbows. You will likely get 3-4 clutches of 3-4 babies on average over maybe 2 seasons. If you have good breeding stock, you can expect to be able to keep some of those babies as your future breeding stock although making sure of course that siblings do not breed with each other or with their parents.

That is why it is sometimes a good idea to start with two or three breeding pairs if you intend to expand your operation in the future. The chicks of one pair can then breed with the chicks of the other pair without genetic problems occurring.

If you intend to breed, contact us for advice first as we can give you many tips to avoid disastrous results. A nest box in the wrong place or the wrong balance of adult budgies in the adult budgie population can lead to aggression, fighting, injuries and even death. Don't take the risk; get advice first.

One final point, beware of buying older birds from pet shops as they will almost certainly be retired breeders or budgies that have shown aggression or inability to care for their offspring and will be of little use to you in the breeding process.

### 3) Taking Your Budgies Home - Hand Training & Bonding – What To Expect

When you pick up your budgies from our aviary, we will spend at least 20-30 minutes with you while we trim the wing feathers and show you how your budgies sit on your hand and how to practice 'stepping up' as this is the method you should use initially to bond with your budgies. You need to bear in mind that the budgies will have partially bonded to the person who has hand trained them over the past few weeks and so when you get it home, the question arises 'What do I do next'?

It is important to understand one thing from the outset. Budgies are not machines; they are not manufactured; they are living creatures with their very own personalities, character, disposition, temperament, nature and identity. These traits will not always be obvious at the time of purchase and are certainly not within the breeder's control. As breeders, we can pick out any budgies that have obvious issues that are not suitable for pets to make sure that they do not go to the pet market and strangely enough, the characteristics that make them **not** suitable for pets make them **very** suitable for breeding and so every budgie has its place.

The point I am making here is that you must be prepared to work with your budgies to mould them into the characters you desire. If you want gentle quiet budgies, there is no point in putting them into an environment where there is stress and noise (typically found where young children are present, children's high-pitched screaming can disrupt and disturb young budgies). If on day one, your budgie's behaviour is not what you expected, be prepared to work with them, they will mould very easily to the characters you require given **your time and patience**. I have said it before but please remember that there are as many characters and personalities in budgies as there are in humans! We start the ball rolling for you by training them to sit on the hand and shoulder and step up from finger to finger, but you must be prepared to give reasonable time to budgies if you want them to be your best friend and that time needs to start from day one.

So, you have just got your budgies home; first of all, please give them a while to settle into their new surroundings, at least a couple of hours. They have been bought from an environment where dozens of other budgies surround them, all chattering and this is very comforting and reassuring to them; they have got used to a particular cage and a group of friends, and they have been passed from hand to hand for the demonstration of tameness, they have been put into a small box and taken to your home, they have been put into a strange cage in a room that they do not recognise and all their usual sounds of reassurance from their 'flock' have gone, it should therefore not be surprising at this stage if your budgies just want to 'chill out' for a while and tune in to their new environment. The day you take them home will probably be the biggest and most stressful day of their little lives; their world will have been turned upside down! Forgive them if they need a while to get their heads together.

A good sign of being 'chilled out' is seeing them preening themselves and each other, chirping and eating. Let them enjoy a little of this for a couple of hours **before** you have your first bonding session with them, but don't leave it too long; it is important to continue the sitting on

the hand and 'pick up or step up' training you have been shown, as soon as possible after they have settled.

Also, don't be too surprised if they just sit still for a few hours. You may think this is not the budgie you saw when you chose it! If you have purchased a lone budgie, this is **very** likely to happen. You may not see the budgie eat or drink for some time, maybe a day or so, although they are likely eating and drinking, it's not always obvious. Don't worry about that for the first 24 hours; longer than that is not good. If you have purchased a lone budgie, please read section 7 of these notes as it is likely that your budgie is lost, depressed, feeling lonely, vulnerable, frightened or just insecure.

If you notice that your budgie's poo looks runny, don't panic, that is quite normal after a particularly stressful time for them. In any event, budgie poo is sometimes normally runny because they urinate and poo through the same vent; it is not separate as in humans. A sudden change in diet can also cause this along with a particularly big eating day on fresh veggies. We use a very general rule here at Whispering Pines if the budgie is eating and lively, it is generally a good sign that it is healthy. A budgie with health problems will normally stop eating, look dishevelled, fluffed up, shaking and quiet and if you notice this in your budgie, you need to act quickly to get help for them.

When you and your budgies are ready, take them out one at a time from the cage, you will need to gently pick them up initially as they may not be bonded to you enough yet to be stepping onto your finger. Allow them to come out themselves through an open door if they will – don't be surprised if they won't! Remove them from the cage by holding them **gently** and setting them on your finger. Do not 'cup' or 'cuddle' your budgies, it may be cute and comforting to you but to a budgie, it is restricted and can cause panic, fear and overheating very quickly. Bad handling will also cause budgies to bite as they have no other way to tell you that the method of handling you are using is uncomfortable for them. If your budgie bites when it is picked up, change your style of pick up making sure there is absolutely no pressure from your hand and that at any time the budgie can just walk out of your hand. Any more pressure than that will make the budgie bite and that can become a habit.

If your budgie fly's away from your hand or shoulder, don't panic, **that is absolutely normal:** **it** is just doing what any bird wants to do which is fly. Never try to stop the bird from flying, and never try and catch or block the bird's flight, you are just alienating yourself from your budgie and it may never learn to trust you. Assuming that you have correctly had its wing feathers trimmed, it will only fly for 3-6 metres before it glides to the floor. Gently pick the budgie up (**do not squeeze it or apply any pressure in the pickup**, baby budgie bones are very fragile), sit it back on your finger and repeat the exercise. Six times is enough for one session and after this, return it to its playground or cage top for a little rest and relaxation; you may have to do this several times to reinforce in the budgie's mind that you are a friend and that they have nothing to fear.

In summary, this is the process.... Pick the budgie up or let it step up if it has got to that stage; let the budgie fly, pick it up, sit it back on your finger and repeat until they **voluntarily** stop flying. At this point, let it sit on your finger for a while and then return it to its playground or cage top, or better still, to your shoulder where they love to sit. It rarely takes more than a dozen times before the budgie learns that you are there to protect it, that you are not a threat and that you are its new best friend.

If they are comfortable sitting on your finger, allow them to sit there for a few minutes and just talk softly to them or whistle gently when they fluff their feathers out (a sign of being relaxed), then use a finger from your other hand to place just under their chest and lift very slightly to get them to 'step up' from one finger to another. Keep replacing the finger they are sitting on with the finger from the opposite hand so that in effect, they are stepping up a staircase. 6-8 times is enough for one session and then let the bird sit on top of the cage while you repeat the process with the other budgie. If you are dextrous enough, do both budgies at the same time as they love that, it is more fun for them and they gain confidence from each other's presence. It takes a little practice to get used to two at a time. This is called 'stepping up' and is how budgies learn to step onto a handler's hand and will soon become second nature so that picking up is no longer required. It takes time; some budgies will get it quicker than others, be patient; they will get it sooner or later.

This 'stepping up process' is also a good method of bonding between the budgies and the handler – twice a day is ideal with a few hours between sessions. Don't forget that your budgies will tire very easily and need to sleep between those sessions. Actually, that is something you may not realise; baby budgies only have small reserves of energy as they do not have the muscle mass of adults. They have a burst of energy and then like to sleep for a while. They may sleep 3-4 times a day, don't be surprised by this.

Please also remember that if you have several people and especially children around your budgie, please give it space and do not overcrowd the budgies; children can get very excited and noisy and the last thing you want to see is budgies that are scared by people. Please also be aware that budgies in the wild spend most of their time on the ground and yours will be happy to run around the floor as well. That makes them easy targets to be trodden on and we sell budgies every week to people who have accidentally trodden on their budgies. Please be careful, especially if there are children around.

So, in summary, the notes in this section relate to the transfer of the bonding process that you should go through to transfer the bonding from the supplier who has hand tamed them - to you. Be patient; just like young children, new things must be learned and can take a little time. The secret is in the regularity of the training; make it twice a day if you can and every day if you can.

I will finish this section with one other point. In our own home, we have a large family cage with 12 budgies. We have never hand-tamed them; they do not leave the cage. They have formed their own flock and we give them everything they need in their cage to keep them happy including a change of scenery, new food, new playthings and new opportunities to ensure their happiness. Many customers look at our family cage and wish to have one like it.

Well, you can! It's just a mix of 12 lovely budgies with mixed personalities that make their own life in their own cage and are, **very obviously, very happy; you only have to watch them**. We do not try to humanise them; we let them be budgies, happy and safe in their own environment where they pay us back by entertaining us for countless hours. We love to watch them interact and play and that is enough for us; we do not need them to sit on us, talk to us or do anything other than be happy and enjoy their safe place. Food for thought for those that do not have the time to give to their budgies but still want to be entertained and amazed by these gorgeous birds.

#### **4) Make Sure Your Budgies Have Been Fully Treated & Protected From Internal & External Parasites**

Ask if the budgies have been treated for mites and worms and if they have received regular vitamin supplements. If the answer is yes, **then ask to see evidence of this; the** supplier should be able to show you the treatments they use and be willing to provide you with a certificate of treatment on request. Here at 'Just Budgies' at Whispering Pines Aviary, we use Avitrol Mite Prevention, Vetafarm Soluvite Vitamin D and Aristopet Avian Wormer as our basic treatments and are happy to provide you with a certificate on request. Talking about certificates, did you know that....

**We can also provide a free budgie birth certificate detailing the hatch date and details of the parentage of your baby budgies. If the budgies are a gift for a child, we will also put the child's name on the certificate showing their ownership of the budgies as a very special memory. At Just Budgies at Whispering Pines Aviary, we go that extra mile to make your purchase something special for you and your family.**

**This is just one of the reasons that so many people choose 'Just Budgies' for their budgies. We show we care with the things we do - that we do not need to do! It's called good old-fashioned customer service and no, that is not a thing of the past, not in our business!**

#### **5) The Importance Of Providing Fresh Water**

Ensure your budgies have fresh water always; twice a day is preferable, especially in warm weather. Clean all food and water dishes daily. Don't buy water and food dishes you only have to fill once a week. You will end up with diseased budgies and it only takes two minutes a day to do the job properly – give your budgies more love and consideration than one-week-old water, would you drink it?

If fact, let's just consider that point further. Would you drink water or eat food that had been left on the side for a day, let alone a week? Exactly! Then don't expect your budgies to enjoy it either, be responsible, and be as loving to them as you expect them to be to you.

Don't be surprised if you don't see your budgies drinking very often; they tend to take a quick sip rather than a long drink. When they are getting sprayed with water (which you should be doing in warm weather), they preen the moisture off their feathers, and so just because you do not see them drink does not mean that you do not need to change the water.

Change the water daily regardless, even if it looks clean. We clean our water containers twice a day regardless of how they look and on a hot day, we put crushed ice in the water containers; our babies deserve it!



## 6) Provide A Clean Cage Of The Correct Size As Well As A 'Playground' To Give 'Out Of Cage Stimulation'

Please ensure you do NOT buy finch cages for budgies; finches are okay with vertical cage space, but budgies need horizontal cage space! Make sure you select a cage that is suitable for budgies and in particular, for **your** group of budgies bearing in mind that it needs to fit the environment and space you have available.

An ideal size for 2 budgies is a cage that is around 60cm wide – for 2 to 6 budgies it should be around 76cm wide and on a stand that can be wheeled around makes it very easy to manoeuvre for cleaning etc. A flat top to the cage allows you to put an external playground or play gym on the top of the cage to give your budgies somewhere to call home when they are out of the cage.

It is also VERY important that there is a large opening door at the front of the cage that gives you full access to all of the perches so that when you want to get your budgies out of the cage, you can get your hand into the cage without scaring the budgies.

Tall cages with small doors are absolutely useless for hand-tame budgies. Cages with shaped roofs do not allow a playground to be placed on the cage. Cages with short perches are cruel to budgies who spend most of their time climbing and running.

The cage and playground are your budgies 'territory' and give them a base to play from leaving your home less likely to be utilised with flight and play.

Budgies absolutely love natural playgrounds on top of their cage, not the 'made in China' types made with dowels and plastic adornments, but the natural handmade tree branch and seagrass mat playgrounds similar to the ones made by Just Budgies at Whispering Pines Aviary which can be found on our website at <http://www.justbudgies.com.au/> – we never make two the same, they are always unique 'one off's – your babies will love them and we keep all our playgrounds at low cost to encourage you to provide one for your budgies.

So what kind of cage do we recommend? The following section details the kind of setup that we believe is perfect for budgies and also big enough to use as a breeding cage if you decide to do that later on.

If you do not have the space for the first one shown, go for a tabletop model around 60-76cm wide shown in the following section.



## **THE 'AVIARY ONE' CAGE SET-UP Home - Perfect Home For Your Budgies**

Our first choice for a design of cage that is ideal for budgies is 61cm wide with a large aperture front opening door to make access easy for cleaning, a pull-out tray at the bottom and two feeder/water bowls. The other dimensions are 42cm deep and 144cm high with the stand which has castor wheels to make it easy to move around with locks on the wheels.

The trolley stand has a useful shelf under the cage and this will also take a 50cm cage that we sell that matches the setup if you want separate accommodation for any reason.

We have these cages in stock and they are available at just \$159 for the cage and stand with 2 perches and 2 feeders - **OR** just \$195 complete with natural climbing mat, natural cave, swing, ladder, foraging tray and veggie dish. You can also choose a superb handmade playground to stand on top of the cage which your budgies will love at 50% off the retail price.

We are happy to make it all up for you or you can take it home flat pack.

This cage set-up is perfect for 2-8 budgies.



## **THE 'KING AND 'QUEEN' CAGE SET-UP Home - Perfect Home For Your Budgies**

This model has the advantage of either sitting on a table or bench top or on a matching stand with shelf and has a flat top to take a playground for your budgies to play on. These cages give great perch length and have a good volume suitable for 2-6 budgies. Don't forget that the more time you allow your budgies to be out of the cage, the better for the health of the budgies.

The model below is the 'King Cage' (in black) and 'Queen Cage' (in white). They are 76cm wide x 45cm deep and 45cm high complete with two perches and 2 feeders for just \$59 and if fitted with a ladder, swing, feature toy, chew mat and foraging tray, then it is just \$98 complete.

As a complete deal, the King or Queen cage with a matching trolley stand and shelf, 2 perches, 2 feeders, ladder, swing, feature toy, chew mat and foraging tray is just \$157 complete!

Our selection of hand-made playgrounds is also available at 50% off the retail price, from just \$39.



## **THE 'PRINCE' AND 'PRINCESS' CAGE SET-UP Home - Perfect Home For Your Budgies**

This model also has the advantage of either sitting on a table or bench top or the available matching stand and has a flat top to take a playground for your budgies to play on. These cages

give great perch length and have a good volume suitable for 2 budgies. Don't forget that the more time you allow your budgies to be out of the cage, the better for the health of the budgies.

The model below is the 'Prince Cage' (in black) and 'Princess Cage' (in white). They are 76cm wide x 45cm deep and 45cm high complete with two perches and 2 feeders for just \$49 and if fitted with a ladder, swing, feature toy and chew mat, then it is just \$78 complete.

As a complete deal, the Prince or Princess cage with a matching trolley stand on wheels with a shelf, 2 perches, 2 feeders, ladder, swing, feature toy and chew mat is just \$127 complete!

Our selection of hand-made playgrounds is also available at 50% off the retail price, from just \$39.



### **THE 'TRAVELLING' CAGE SET-UP** **Temporary Home - Perfect Home For Your Budgies**

This model also has the advantage of being small enough to use as a temporary travelling cage for 2-6 budgies and is perfect for car journeys. It is often purchased by caravanners and campers who take their budgies on holiday with them and is suitable for 2 budgies for this purpose.

It can be used on a table or bench top and has a flat top to take a playground for your budgies to play on.

The model shown below is the 'Travelling Cage' (in black) and is 50cm wide x 35cm deep and 35cm high complete with two perches and 2 feeders for just \$39, and if fitted with a ladder and swing it is just \$58 complete.

Our selection of hand-made playgrounds is also available at 50% off the retail price, from just \$39.



### **PLAYGROUNDS HANDMADE IN AUSTRALIA** **Playtime – Perfect Playtime For Your Budgies**

Take a look at just a few of our many playgrounds below – natural and all handmade in our own workshops in Australia.... Prices range from \$39-\$99







If you already have a cage that does NOT have a flat top, go for a 150cm high freestanding playground to stand by the side of their cage.... Text 0412 993 334 for details

Keep budgies interested and occupied with different things to do – change the contents and positions of the contents in the cage from week to week – have two or three options – change positions of perches and toys; they love the change.

We recommend providing natural wood for the perches as well as it benefits the bird in many ways such as foot exercise and mental stimulation. It gives them various textures that twist and turn to make their play more fun. Natural wood is known to prevent bumble foot, arthritis and pressure sores and is so much better than using machined round dowels only. Try pine cones, leaves, grass or hay, plastic table tennis balls, and empty cotton reels in the bottom to see them having real fun!

We recommend creating a 50% water solution of white vinegar and hot water to wash away any disease or bacteria the toys and perches may carry. Please check to make sure that the wood you are using is budgie safe before it enters the cage. We use Eucalyptus branches which are really enjoyed by birds and are safe.

You can buy a perch made out of vitamins or calcium, it's called a vitamin or calcium perch and they love to grind their beaks on that as well. Cuttlefish bone is also ideal in the cage providing calcium and vitamins.

**Never** use sandpaper-covered perches and **never** put sandpaper in the bottom of the cage as the glue used to stick down the sand causes major problems for the budgies when ingested. We use butchers' white paper in the bottom of our cages which we buy by the ream. Newspaper or other paper like A3 printing paper works fine or alternatively, use no paper at all and just make sure you clean the tray at least once a week.

If your bird cage is located in a noisy place with a loud environment, we recommend you relocate the cage to a quiet dark place in the evening so that the birds can have a full 12 hours of sleep. Some people like to cover the cage at night time and we think that is a good idea as it allows the birds to get the quality undisturbed sleep they need; just remember to use a light bird friendly material that the birds cannot ingest like a cotton bed sheet. Just cover the top half of the cage so that there is still air circulation in the cage.

## 7) The Importance Of Feeding Fresh & Nutritionally Beneficial Food

Avian science and nutritionists have discovered that the best diet for budgies is a fresh veggie diet in addition to seeds which is far better than a restricted diet of just seeds. We recommend a 'chop diet' which includes vegetables, sprouts and salads to accompany the seed. A good chop diet may consist of any of the following, try and make it as mixed and varied as the seasons and prices allow....

This is our suggested 'chop food' diet – just pick the items that **you** normally eat or that are in season.....

- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Brussel Sprouts
- Capsicum



- Chilies (great nutritional value and budgies cannot feel the heat)
- Squash
- Spinach
- Herbs
- Sweet Potatoes
- Carrots
- Bird safe edible flowers
- Mixed sprouted seeds
- Mung beans
- Fruit 1-2 times a week – they are not keen on citrus generally – apple is enjoyed
- Hard-boiled egg once every 7-10 days (for protein – see section 6)

Seed is important but, in moderation. Seed is easy when you are busy but seeds alone will leave the birds nutritionally deficient. You also need to be careful with your choice of seed, budgies in the wild tend to seek out spinifex grass and feast on those seeds, however, Spinifex grass has a very low-fat content. Most seeds you buy in a shop that are supposedly for budgies, are loaded with canary and finch seed which are high in fat because it is cheap. Although canaries and finches can tolerate that seed, budgies cannot and often fatty liver disease is the resulting problem and that can be terminal!

Remember that seeds are nutritionally incomplete, lacking vitamins, minerals and protein (protein is covered in the next section), they should therefore only be a very small part of a budgie's diet and should never be the entire diet. Please make sure however that budgies have seed available at all times as they can quickly starve if the veggies being given are inadequate or not palatable.

If you gradually offer your bird fewer seeds replacing them with healthier options from the list of the 'chop foods' above, your bird will eventually start eating more of the properly balanced foods to give them a healthy diet but always make sure that seed is on hand.

If you are taking your budgies over to a chop diet that they have never had before, 'no' to a food item one day - does not mean 'no forever' - KEEP TRYING! Put a small sprinkle of seed on top of the chop diet. That usually gets them used to it and once they do, they just love their fresh chop diet every day.

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## **OUR ADVERT FOR THE BEST SEED AVAILABLE SPECIFICALLY FOR BUDGIES**

**MILLET** – The best seed available for budgies and is available by mail order with free post!

**PLEASE** don't think that the 'budgie mixes' you find in pet shops, and supermarkets are okay for your precious budgies – they are not! They contain wheat, barley, rolled oats and other seeds that have far too high a fat content for budgies who suffer easily from fatty liver disease.

Our 'Budgie-Specific Diet Mix' contains Panorama Millet, White French Millet and Jap Millet along with a small controlled amount of HULLED oats and is recommended by vets and used widely at bird wildlife sanctuaries.

Hulled Oats refer to oat grains with the inedible outer husk removed but still include the cereal germ, the bran, and the endosperm and is the least processed and purest form of whole oats. This combined special mix offers high amounts of many vitamins and minerals, such as manganese, phosphorus, copper, B vitamins, iron, selenium, magnesium, and zinc. It is rich in Niacin which helps budgies body manage enzyme reactions.

To order, just text 0412 993 334 with your name and address. Our half-kilo stay-fresh tubs are just \$7 each and when ordering 4 or more, it's FREE POST! Order 8 tubs and receive free post and a free cage toy for your budgies.




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Make sure you have a cuttlefish available for your budgies in the cage, it helps to keep their beaks trim as well as providing vitamins like calcium carbonate, magnesium, potassium, zinc, and iron.

Budgies love seed blocks (seeds stuck together with honey and water) **BUT**, honey is not beneficial to budgies! Even more worrying is that some seed blocks do not use honey at all; they use diluted wood glue and I am not even going to start to tell you what problems that can cause. Keep it natural, not manufactured! No seed blocks, please!

Budgies also love to chew on eucalyptus leaves if you have any in the garden; if not, they also love a fresh small branch of the golden cane palm which are common just about everywhere on the coast of Australia, they don't eat it, but they love chomping it up. They also enjoy dandelion leaves and their flowers but ensure they have not been sprayed with weedkiller. Wash them first regardless. Try grass as well, but not if a lawnmower has cut it as the mower mulches the

grass and starts off fermentation which will sour a budgie's stomach. You must cut grass by hand with scissors or shears or pull it by hand.

In the wild, your budgie would spend most of its day travelling and searching for food and water. This involves exercise of course but also increases their curiosity and intelligence. They fly long distances, investigate potential plants and water sources and learn through experience what to look for and how to get it. This foraging behaviour keeps both their body and mind active and healthy and with a little effort, we can replicate some of those benefits for our own budgies.

With our own birds at Just Budgies at Whispering Pines Aviary, we place some of their seed in a low flat dish on the base of the cage. It must be placed away from their usual pooping spots to reduce the risk of spoiling. Offering food this way means our birds must fly down to the ground (the natural place for feeding) to get their main meal. Instead of just fluttering from perch to perch, they must exert effort to fly down and back up, probably many times a day. Mix in a few dry leaves or small twigs to really raise their interest.

We have budgies in our aviary that are 14-15 years old and the basic secret of that old age is simply that they have lived on a mixed and varied diet with protein and exercise. To get that exercise, you may find toys that they love, but most toys will be ignored and so you have to experiment a little. Even a ball of screwed-up clean white paper can provide them with fun or an empty egg box with the lid removed. Putting treats like a few sunflower seeds in the shapes where the eggs normally fit gives them something to forage and play with, but not too many sunflower seeds!

#### KYM HAMILTON – AVIAN VETERINARY NURSE & NATURAL DIETITIONIST SAYS...

“No need to buy expensive shop-bought seed when nature provides everything a budgie needs and it’s free! The wild grass seed that is found in our parks and fields can be picked at the rate of 1 kilo per 10-15 minutes and that is enough to keep a couple of budgies in seed for many days. There is another benefit to wild seeds; you only need to give them half of what they would normally eat. As Garry has said, shop-bought ‘mixed budgie seed’ is full of high-fat content canary and finch seed but budgies are desert birds and cannot tolerate fat in their diet. You can also freeze the wild grass seed for use in the winter when it is not growing in the wild”.

“You can also find native branches and leaves for them to chew on which helps to stop their beaks from growing because they grow just like our fingernails”.

GARRY’S NOTE.... To prove a point, Kym walked up my road to a grass verge and collected enough beautiful wild grass seed to last a couple of budgies a week or more; the wild grass was growing on our doorstep, and what a nice way to spend some time, wander across the fields and gather some wild grass seed for our babies! Kym also gives her birds wild Bottle Brush and Melaleuca. Nice tip Kym!



How good is that, when you combine the natural seed with the 'chop diet', it is a real winner! At Whispering Pines Aviary, we collect natural foods and if you have the time, it's an enjoyable and worthwhile exercise.

Kym also points out that you should be very careful when buying 'Forage Mix' from pet shops, it is very high in fat and other 'unknown fillers and rubbish' – it's a bit like feeding burgers to your kids three times a day! Kym has treated a budgie weighing in at 98 grams, double what it should be and that is not the worse that Kym has seen; she also weighed one in at 112 grams! A normal Australian Budgie should weigh about 30-40 grams with 35 grams as an ideal target.

In conclusion, if like us, you love to see your budgies enjoy food, allow them to forage (bottom feed with mixed interesting foods from seeds to 'chop diet' and include a few leaves) because that is just so natural. Don't buy manufactured forage; they are using the natural word 'forage' to sell a rubbish product; make your own so that you know what is in it.

Another very important point from Kym is that **PLEASE** do not buy rope toys, the ones with brightly coloured strands especially, as these are a death trap for birds.

Kym has provided us with the photos below of items that were removed from the stomachs of birds. Birds are 'hard wired' to chew on anything; this gives them impactions in the crop causing a slow and painful death, not exactly what you intend when shopping for toys for your baby!



At Whispering Pines Aviary, we recently had a customer's cage left with us with two budgies in it and it had a rope toy hanging from the top of the cage; luckily, we were walking past it when we found one of the budgies hanging with its head between the strands of rope, we had just a few seconds to cut it free. It survived thank heavens but it was pure luck that we were walking by when it happened, 30 seconds later it would have been dead.

This same warning applies to Happy Huts or Snuggle Beds; they are made of materials that can be chewed and ingested with death. With all the above warnings, perhaps your view of your local pet shops that sell these goods has become more appropriate – buyer beware!

## 8) Protein & Its Nutritional Benefits For Your Budgies

If your budgie ever seems lethargic or quieter than usual, please ensure that they are getting protein and the easiest way to achieve this is in the form of hard-boiled egg in their diet as the notes in the previous section.

The hard-boiled egg should be crushed up (with some of the shell) and sprinkled with a little chopped broccoli or celery if they are getting it for the first time, then add a sprinkle of seeds on top to let the budgies identify it as food. This is given to all our birds at least once a week at Whispering Pines Aviary and they eat it like it will be their last meal!

The picture below shows the hard-boiled egg, broccoli, celery and tomato chopped up ready for our budgies. There is enough here for 50-60 birds or more!



Of all the foods we prepare for our budgies, this dish is the one they go for and they can even smell us preparing it; the excitement in the aviary is amazing. We prepare six eggs for maybe 100 or more birds and so you can see that the amount they eat is small. If you only have two budgies, they may only need a teaspoon full so make it when **you** have eggs for breakfast.

In summary, our golden rule for complete budgie happiness where food is concerned is simple, make sure you feed them a well-balanced and mixed diet based on low-fat seeds, fresh chopped veggies and protein in the form of hard-boiled eggs.

## 9) Avoiding The Risk Of Stress In Your Budgies

It is important to ensure your budgies do not suffer from stress. Ensure they do not suffer extremes of heat or cold or drafts. Be their friend – communicate with them and let them sit on

your hand as much as possible. Spray them with water from a mist bottle, especially on hot days; they love it!

Beware if you see them panting or sitting with their wings out from their side; it means they are hot and need to be cooled. Use an electric fan at least 2 or 3 metres from the cage to give them gentle air ventilation. Remember that in the wild, they can fly to cool off, but in a cage, they cannot sweat like a human and they cannot fly distances in a cage and so they have no way to cool down if they overheat.

**\*\* If you have children handling the budgies, oversee their handling for the first few weeks as a baby budgie's bone structure is very fragile when young and can be damaged and even killed with rough handling. Young children tend to pick budgies up by cupping their hand over the bird and this can crush the delicate wings and ribs of a baby budgie. You should supervise to ensure your children use the 'step up' technique. Please also remember that children get very excited with a baby budgie and there is a huge risk factor in this situation. Many budgies lose their lives every week when excited children crush them. Please supervise properly, especially if your children are over-excited or noisy. \*\***

Beware of other pets! Dogs, cats and parrots will usually instinctively grab a budgie; you do not usually get a second chance especially when they are out of the cage and vulnerable. Don't take chances; please ensure there are no other pets in the room when your budgies are out of their cage, that includes other types of birds. If your budgie is scared of a particular object or environment, please do not put them in that situation without taking things very slowly and introducing them to the situation a little at a time and only if it is absolutely necessary.

We recently had a situation where a lovely pair of our baby budgies sold to a parent for their child suffered an oven fire in their home some weeks later. Although the budgies quickly got over the smoke inhalation, loud noises petrified them to the point of them cowering in the bottom of their cage. It was the sound of the smoke alarm and the general commotion that created a fear of humans in them.

We took the babies back for a week and very slowly went through the hand-taming procedure again with them to get them confident with a human connection again. Then we moved on to carefully and slowly introducing them to noise and using a vacuum around them and, eventually, sitting them in the middle of a round table with 8 people seated all around for a party. It took a week to get the babies back to their original confidence and it was lovely to see. If your budgies experience trauma or shock, don't give up on them; contact us for advice. Budgies are worth the effort; these are gorgeous innocent birds!

## **10) The Importance Of Trimming Wing Feathers To Reduce Accidents**

First, we should say that if you never intend to let your budgie out of its cage or aviary, then this section is irrelevant as the wing feathers would never need to be trimmed.

However, where trimming wing feathers is concerned, here is where experienced budgie breeders like myself and veterinary nurse Kym Hamilton will give an unbiased opinion on both sides of the picture and allow you to make your own decision.

Some will say that you do **not** need to trim wing feathers if...

“you make sure that all ceiling fans are switched off, that all windows and doors are closed, that curtains or blinds cover all glass windows, and that all reflective surfaces like wall pictures are covered. They will also say that if your budgie did escape through a door or window if it has wings untrimmed, it can fly back to you. They will also say that the best way to train a budgie to fly safely is in a room with closed curtains and play gyms and soft matting etc. and that wing trimming is dangerous because a cat or dog might get it if it cannot fly properly to escape”.

HOWEVER, Both Veterinary Nurse Kym Hamilton and I (Garry) say this...

In the perfect world, we would love to see all of the ideas for the protection of the birds put in place around fans, windows, doors and reflective surfaces of the home in practice, BUT that is probably never really going to happen unless you are lucky enough to be able to give your bird a dedicated bird room with all dangers removed - in this case, we would then agree that there is no need to trim wing feathers. However, most modern homes are open-plan in design and providing those protections and dedicated safe areas is almost impossible.

Our experience on a week-by-week basis has shown us how many budgies are killed or maimed flying into glass windows, reflective surfaces and ceiling fans. Glass windows are the biggest danger for budgies as they simply cannot see that the glass is there. Budgies fly at about 10 metres per second and that is fast enough to break the neck of a budgie.

With sensible wing feather trimming, we take that budgie's flying speed down to about 3-4 metres per second which does not stop the bird from flying or gliding, but does prevent it from power flying (flying upwards) towards fans or windows and doors.

Veterinary Nurse Kym Hamilton also adds this....

“Wing feather trimming is an aid to training the budgie as well- always do the first 5-7 flight feathers on both sides so that they can still fly, but gently glide to the ground - I do wing feather trimming as well and it can be a 2 person job for some birds - We see a LOT of wing hacks resulting in the need for surgery to ‘imp’ feathers back on (Imping is when we put the bird under anaesthesia and re-attach feathers to protect the wing) - a bad wing feather trim can also send a bird crashing to the ground resulting in bruising and splitting of the keel – it needs to be done carefully by a professional”.

The feathers grow back in about 4-5 months or even less if it has an earlier moult but by then the bird will have learned the layout of your home and what windows and walls are, at which time you can make your own decision if you want to trim again or leave them as they are, with full power flight.

Here at ‘Just Budgies’ at Whispering Pines Aviary, any budgie bought from us can be bought back to us at any time for a free wing feather trim. Please be careful doing it yourself using the internet as a guide; so many end up at the vet and can cost you many hundreds of dollars along with pain and discomfort and even death for your budgie. It is not as easy as it looks as every budgie is different, their weight and flight strength are different and trimming needs to be done according to the bird’s size, weight and age.

Can I also add here that any full-flight bird that has **not** had its wing feathers trimmed and it escapes is normally dead within 1-2 hours of escape, picked off by magpies, butcher birds and other predators or hit by a car? However, if the wing feathers have been trimmed, there is an excellent chance that you can simply pick it up, as it will only be able to fly a short distance. We have never in our experience heard of a budgie flying back home; in practice, it simply does not happen; they are not homing pigeons and do not have that homing instinct.

We fully understand and respect that some people will not like the thought of wing feather trimming. Still, it is no more than a small temporary haircut for the budgie and gives the baby the health and obvious happiness it deserves by being confident that it will not damage itself in flight around a house. To those who do **not** trim their budgie's feathers when they intend to let them out of the cage, we would say this.... that situation is similar to allowing a child to ride a bike without a helmet! Baby budgies deserve no less love and no less protection and wing feather trimming gives them the protection they deserve.

All that said, we absolutely respect every budgie owner's opinion and we are happy to supply budgies with or without wing feather trimming. The choice is yours, as it should be. We are all budgie lovers. Otherwise, we would not be reading these notes; we should never forget that; we just have to tell you what we have found in the many years we have spent owning, breeding and handling budgies. We trim the wing feathers of around 1400-1500 birds a year and have the experience to get it right for you; please do **not** do it yourself following YouTube videos!

To finish this section, we should also say that we assume of course that no sensible person would ever let a budgie fly around with a cat or dog in the same area. We have seen videos posted on YouTube of budgies flying onto the backs of dogs and cats. This is a stupid stunt risking the life of the bird and being shown as being successful on the video and then copied by hundreds of others who lose the life of their bird in the process!

## **11) How to correctly gender your budgie – male or female**

A boy or a girl – what is your budgie? When baby budgies first leave the nest box, they spend about a week being fed by their mum and dad before they are expected to look after themselves. This is the stage at which we usually take them away from their parents and put them in our nursery for baby budgies. Their hand-taming continues for another week before they return to their new homes. Customers often ask what sex the baby budgie is and here is the answer.

**A baby budgie at about 8 weeks old is difficult to be 100% sure what sex it is.** All babies are born with their cere (the bit above the beak where the nostrils are), purplish in colour. Over a period of a few weeks, this purple turns to either blue for a boy or white / cream for a girl. After a few more weeks or months, the girls can turn brown, usually when they become hormonal.

We can give an educated guess on the sex of a baby budgie that has not coloured up in the cere based on our experience and we normally get it right **but** there are sometimes exceptions. Many babies colour up early on which makes it easy, but occasionally they are slow to 'colour up' and this can leave a doubt about their sex. The important thing is that for most pet situations, it should not really matter. A boy by itself is slightly more likely to talk, a boy or a



girl will bond equally as well to its owner, two boys will live very happily together, two girls will live happily together, a boy and a girl will live happily together (plus you may see some lovely romance).

The reason for this is that budgies are very social and in the wild, this sociability can and will inevitably save their lives and that is why they are so social. Our advice to you is don't worry too much about the sex of the babies; make your selection based on age and how pretty they appear to you, and you won't be disappointed then.

If you end up with a boy and a girl (our favourite combination), it is very rare for them to produce an egg although it has been known. Generally, budgies will not breed unless you give them a nest box to breed in. If you decide to breed your budgies, please contact us for help and advice if you bought your budgies from us.

### **And So - To Wrap Up These Notes...**

Enjoy your baby budgies – they are probably one of the most lovable and easy-to-keep pets you could ever own – there is a very good reason why they are the third most popular pet in the world! We love our budgies; they live in complete luxury and happiness at 'Just Budgies' at Whispering Pines Aviary; when you visit our very special set-up, we hope you will be impressed with the love and attention they receive and we hope you get as attached to your budgies as we do to ours. At Whispering Pines Aviary.

With the care, love and attention we give our babies, some of our budgies in the main aviary are over 14 years old, still flying, still chirping and still enjoying a happy life. In return for the care and attention we give them, they give us more fun and happiness than we can ever describe. Budgies are the best pets ever and make the best friends!

If there is any other subject you think should be included in these notes then please let us know and we will update the notes and send them to you again. Your input is very welcomed and is valuable information to allow us to continually improve our services to you.

If you have purchased your babies from 'Just Budgies' at Whispering Pines Aviary, you are very welcome to message us at any time for any further advice and help you need. We are dedicated to seeing our budgies live with the highest quality care, surrounded by the love and affection that gives healthy beautiful babies.

Just as important, we are dedicated to ensuring that their owners are well-trained in providing those necessities. In return, we know that our budgies will give back all the love and affection that anybody could ask for.

Please take a look at our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/JustBudgies](http://www.facebook.com/JustBudgies) and give us a 'Like' – it helps us to promote our business. If you think our notes have been helpful, hit the 'Follow' button as well and we will keep you updated with new notes as we publish them. If you have the time, please do a review for us – word of mouth is 50% of our business and reviews help tremendously.

Facebook Reviews: [www.facebook.com/JustBudgies](http://www.facebook.com/JustBudgies)

Google Review: Google [Just Budgies at Whispering Pines Aviary](#) and select 'add a review'.

Gumtree Reviews: [www.gumtree.com.au/s-seller/Garry/1021690197](http://www.gumtree.com.au/s-seller/Garry/1021690197)

If you need to contact us, please use any of the following....

Telephone, Text or WhatsApp: 0412 993 334

Email: [Garry@JustBudgies.Com.Au](mailto:Garry@JustBudgies.Com.Au)

Web Site: <http://justbudgies.com.au/>

Our opening hours are....

Monday – 9.30 – 5.00

Tuesday – 9.30 – 5.00

Wednesday – 9.30 – 5.00

Thursday – 9.30 – 5.00

Friday – 9.30 – 5.00

Saturday – 9.30 – 5.00

Sunday – 9.30 – 5.00

**Text or Phone or Email for an appointment to view our beautiful budgies - you will love the selection process; we make it special!**

If you are buying for a birthday/Christmas/valentine/anytime present, just let us know and if you are buying a cage and budgie combination, we will have your cage all set up and ready to go with a special message for the recipient. What a present, we will make it a special occasion for you. We have full credit card facilities and also provide a free carry-home box for your babies.

If you travel up to 90 minutes to collect your budgies, we supply free cardboard carry-home boxes. If you are travelling a distance of more than 90 minutes, we have small travel cages that cost just \$15 each and are perfect for travelling, trips to vets, holiday trips etc. If you are travelling for more than 3 hours, please use a normal budgie cage of at least 60cm long and place it on the back seat with a seat belt round it or securely in the rear of a 4WD car (not the open back of a truck or ute). If you buy the cage from Whispering Pines, we will deck it out with seeds, water, perches and leaves for your budgie's journey to ensure they are not stressed.



Above picture – small travel cages just \$15 each

Whispering Pines Aviary would like to once again thank Kym Hamilton – Avian Veterinary Nurse and a firm believer in natural food for budgies.

My name is Garry Mills, a professional breeder of budgerigars and 'Budgie Whisperer'. I have the great pleasure of co-owning 'Just Budgies' at Whispering Pines Aviary based in Mudgeeraba, Gold Coast, Australia.

Garry & Sandy Mills  
'Just Budgies' at Whispering Pines Aviary  
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Gold Coast  
Australia  
4213

Check out our website at [www.justbudgies.com.au](http://www.justbudgies.com.au)

Check out our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/JustBudgies](https://www.facebook.com/JustBudgies)  
While you are there, follow our page to get ongoing advice

Email us at [Garry@JustBudgies.Com.Au](mailto:Garry@JustBudgies.Com.Au)

Phone or text message us on 0412 993 334