

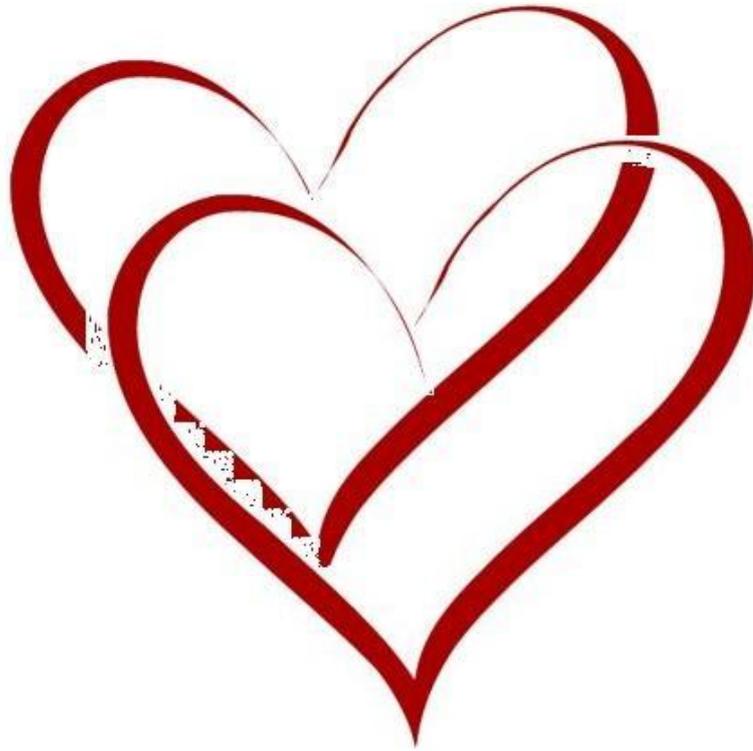
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# Welcome to Birdline UK LTD Parrot Rescue



**We have put this welcome pack  
together to help you with advice on  
caring for a bird**

These are guidelines for Birdline UK LTD members only.  
If you have any questions, please contact your Area Co-ordinator.



**In loving memory of Doddie Kent 7/4/1945 – 28/9/2017  
Your life was a blessing, your memory a treasure.  
You are loved beyond words and missed beyond measure.**

**This pack was produced by Doddie Kent and Melinda Laws on behalf of Birdline UK LTD.**

The information provided in this pack is designed to provide helpful information in the care and wellbeing of psittacines. This information is not meant to be used, nor should it be used to treat any medical condition. For diagnosis and/or treatment of any medical problem, ALWAYS consult an Avian Veterinarian. Birdline UK Parrot Rescue accepts no responsibility or liability for any damages or consequences from any treatment or actions to any animal/person following the guidance within this manual. References are provided for information only and do not constitute endorsement of any websites etc.

**Disclaimer:**

The information contained within this guidance is true and complete to the best of our knowledge. All recommendations are made without guarantee on behalf of Birdlike UK Parrot Rescue.



# BIRDLINE PARROT RESCUE

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BIRDLINE U.K. LTD.



# BIRDLINE PARROT RESCUE

## 1: WELCOME TO BIRDLINE UK PARROT RESCUE

### 1.1: About birdline

We have a network of volunteer helpers, Safe houses, Area Co-ordinators, Managers and Directors, all of whom work from their own homes, without payment, thus permitting the organisation to offer a loving secure home to a wide variety of birds. Birds are therefore never without a safe home.

Rescued birds are collected by an Area Coordinator who then decides where to place the bird, until a suitable long term home can be found. Ill-treated birds, and those with behavioural problems are referred to our specialist carers who rehabilitate the bird at their home and work with it until it is retrained or is well enough to be re-homed. Since 1992 Birdline has helped over 3,000 birds to find new homes.

### 1.2: The Parrot

Although it seems to be stating the obvious, a parrot is unlike any other pet you may have had or still have. Parrots are by nature gregarious and love company and attention. Their demands in this respect can, at times, be overwhelming. Keepers of parrots must be prepared to spend considerable amounts of time in play with their parrots each day, if it is to remain a healthy and well-adjusted friend. The rewards associated with a good relationship (the bond) with your parrot can be enormous, but it doesn't happen on its own, you must work for it with your bird. Young birds are easier to bond with than older ones as they will imprint you as the parent, whereas older birds will already have a "parent" somewhere. It isn't impossible though to form the bond with an older bird; it just takes time and patience.



They are not stupid, and can blush (very noticeable in Macaws), remember things that happened previously and talk to us in our own language. There is a wide range of opinions regarding the intelligence of parrots; the view that prevails within Birdline is that they can be equated to an intelligent 3-year-old child. This intelligence level also includes tantrums, the destructiveness, the playfulness and general behaviour of that child. With a few exceptions, they are generally quite long lived (up to 90+ years have been recorded).

Parrots are omnivorous; this means that in the main they eat both plant and animal sources of food. There are some exceptions to this rule (nectar eating parrots). However, not all parrots will thrive on exactly the same diet. This is due to the fact that there is such a wide variety of species living in a very



diverse range of habitats, that the basic foodstuffs each lives on will differ equally widely. Female parrots, without exception, do require more calcium than males, especially when they are laying eggs.

### **1.3: Hints and Tips to enhance the comfort and health of your bird**

This section provides some hints and tips regarding parrot care. The remainder of the document covers these issues (and more) in further detail.

#### *Social Needs & Amusement*

The remarkable intelligence of parrots requires that they have a varied and stimulating environment. Parrots that have been severely neglected have been known to literally "go insane," rocking in the cage, mutilating themselves horribly, or falling into a deep depression. If you do not think you will have time for your bird - do not get a bird. If you find you can't give the bird the proper attention, contact your ACO for assistance. This is a living, breathing, thinking, feeling creature.

Parrots need interaction. They are flock creatures by nature. They should be in a communal area of the home so they feel they are part of the family. Also, the more time you can give them outside of their cage, the better adjusted they will be. Not everyone has the luxury of keeping their bird with them all day. In that case, make sure the bird comes out of the cage as soon as you get home. Get up a little earlier in the morning so the bird can have some time with you. Do not relegate your bird to a back bedroom where he gets to see you for a few minutes in the morning and maybe an hour before you go to bed. The bird will develop behavioural issues such as screaming and destructive behaviour due to boredom and frustration. Imagine being locked in a cage in a room all by yourself for 22 hours a day. It doesn't sound very appealing, does it? When you are away from home, it's always a nice idea to leave a radio or TV on for your bird. Paper, magazines and catalogues (no staples) are a wonderful addition to your bird's cage, most love to chew them.

#### *Environment*

- Do not let your bird be near or 'play' with cats, dogs, reptiles, larger aggressive birds, or children too young to understand how to handle them.
- Never leave a bird unattended out of its cage, even for a moment.
- Ensure the Bird is in a safe space and can't fly out windows/ doors.
- Birds need lots of sleep – 10 hours at least. Provide this quiet time each evening – covering the cage can provide darkness and warmth.
- Do not use PTFE-coated non-stick cookware (sold under such trade names as Teflon, Silverstone, etc.), irons or ironing boards around birds. The fumes they emit when heated (which we can't detect) are toxic to birds.



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- Birds have very extensive respiratory systems. Do not allow any smoking in the same room as the bird, and avoid using aerosols such as hair spray, hair dye, deodorant, perfume, cleaning products, etc. near your bird.

## *Travel Cage*

- Ensure that the carrier is adequate for the bird's size, i.e. bar spacing and strength.
- Make sure doors, food bowl hatches and the bottom are secure – use cable ties if necessary.
- Carriers must have a perch, and a minimum of two bowls providing seed/food and water.
- Always travel your bird with seed and water, even on short journeys, as there could be an unforeseen incident that could hold you up for hours.
- When travelling a bird on longer journeys, a bowl of fruit & veg should be added.
- Regular stops must be taken to ensure the bird can eat, as not all birds are happy to eat whilst travelling.
- Unless your companion bird is very, very nervous, it is unnecessary to cover the carrier
- It is best to cover the carrier when transporting aviary birds.



## *Cage and other equipment*

- Cages should be large enough that the bird can spread their wings entirely and fly from perch to perch.
- Do not use sandpaper perches because they can irritate the feet.
- Use perches of various sizes. The bird's opposing toes should not touch when grasped on a perch. Put the most comfortable perch up high for the night time roost.
- Do not use sawdust, sand or other medium on the cage floor where you can't see the droppings.
- Newspaper is safe to use, paper towels or computer paper or similar also work well and should be changed daily.
- Provide a wide variety of safe toys and rotate them regularly as they get bored easily. Remove and throw away toys that have become soiled or dangerous (in particular ropes that have become frayed can lead to strangulation or entanglements). Always watch a bird with a new toy. Make sure there are no small pieces to ingest, or parts to get entangled in.



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- **Lighting:** It is thought that UV lighting can be of benefit to birds. It can help birds that pluck, or are unwell, and healthy birds enjoy bathing in it. Ordinary household lighting does not replace sunlight, but there are lights that can provide UV and UVA light, which are good for colours, feather condition, and wellbeing of birds. One of the most popular companies that provide UV lights is Arcadia: their lights provide a minimum of 2.4% UV and 12% UVA light.

## *Diet*

- Provide a varied diet to ensure that your feathered friend has a range of foods and doesn't get bored with their meals. The bulk should consist of seeds or pellets with fruit and vegetables offered daily. Place fresh food in a separate dish and discard daily.
- What is healthy for you is generally okay for your bird, with some exceptions. You can share your meals if you avoid salt, sugar and excess spices. No avocado, chocolate, onion, mushroom, alcohol or caffeine. Store pellets in the fridge, and seed in a cool dry place.
- Be careful with foods warmed in the microwave as heating is uneven and often leaves 'hot spots' in the food that can cause burns in a bird's mouth, oesophagus and crop.
- Grit is not necessary for most parrots.
- Change water frequently – at least daily.

## *Feather Condition*

- Birds preen constantly. This is normal behaviour and does not indicate mites. Do NOT use a mite disk or insecticides near your bird.
- Your bird should be bathed at least twice a week with plain water (no shampoo) and you can add Aloe Vera Juice or Gel if you wish. The water should be tested for temperature first, whether sprayed, or put in a shallow bowl for a splash around. The bird should be completely dry before nightfall.

## *Wing Clipping*

- Birdline believes that a bird has a right to flight.
- We only consider clipping if the bird is a hazard to itself when fully flighted i.e. if a bird has always previously been clipped and can't control its flying and landing and may damage itself by hitting walls etc.
- This is not a decision that should be made lightly and is only made when the welfare of the bird is at risk.
- Only ADULT birds will be considered for clipping - any bird under a year old should not be clipped as it needs to develop the chest muscles and skills necessary to fly.



- Birds may only be clipped with the permission of Birdline.co.uk. If you believe your bird should be clipped talk to your area manager.
- Birds may only be clipped by a person approved by Birdline, as clipping the wrong feathers or clipping too much can permanently damage the bird.
- Remember clipping does not stop a bird flying – never take a bird with clipped wings outside unless in a harness or carrier.

#### **1.4: Understanding natural behaviour**

Most parrots cannot be considered domesticated pets. With the exception of budgerigars and cockatiels, most species are only a few generations removed from their wild ancestors. Some birds sold as pets today may have had wild-caught parents. What does this mean? It means that instincts rule and if bird owners keep this in mind when training their pets, they will have a healthier relationship with their bird and there will be far fewer painful nips.

There are some pretty universal signs when a bird is saying, "Back off". Your relationship will be the most healthy when it involves trust and reciprocal "respect". So watch your parrot, learn his body language and respect it – for instance if your parrot puffs himself up and his eyes start to flash, don't reach in saying, "Oh it's sooo cute!". Back off, remove your hands from the bird's personal space, and calm him down using a soothing voice.

Books on parrot behaviour may help you, but the best way to learn the signs is to watch your bird and make a note of specific reactions, and think about how to interpret them and handle them better. For example, "When I approach him quickly from behind he spins around. This means I've startled him and an instinctive response has kicked in. I should talk to him first so he knows I'm there."

One special thing to look for is when your bird seems to be in a trance-like state. This is a natural protective behaviour. In the wild parrots "take turns" standing watch for the flock for any danger. They are in a hyper-alert state at that time, blocking out all extraneous (i.e. non-dangerous) stimuli. A sudden movement or threatening approach during that "trance" can make them lunge instinctively.

One of the most important things to remember when your bird bites is that it is instinctive, and is normally because you have done something to scare or startle him. Remember, biting is one of the few ways parrots can show emotion. In the wild, parrots will bite their partner to make them fly away from perceived danger (your parrot could just be trying to protect you). When your parrot bites you, it's natural to feel upset, frightened, or even angry – parrots can sense these emotions, so if possible, return the bird to the cage, walk away, calm yourself down, and tend to the wound if necessary. Return to your



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bird a while later and softly reassure him that everything is ok.

## *Sexual Maturity*

The foundation you build with a young bird will make all the difference in how you can handle him when he reaches maturity. Parrots reach sexual maturity at around four years of age, and just like human's their personality may change. You may have to rebuild your relationship on different terms.

We have to learn to pay close attention to their behaviour and learn to recognize when they are over-excited (it is often called "overload" in Amazons) and can't quite control themselves. It is in this context that unexpected bites often occur. Sometimes the signs of overload are subtle, sometimes they're done in an outright "flash" dance. While you can usually calm the bird down from this "stance," you shouldn't just reach in fast with your hand if he begins to show these signals.

Mainly **people** are the cause of the overstimulation. Humans often play with parrots which they loved as young birds, but by age four the bird may become very aggressive if you play the same game. It is very important to accept your bird as an individual and not try to force behaviours just because you enjoy them. We have found that once owners try to understand their bird's moods rather than trying to **change** their moods, the relationship blossoms again.

## *Behaviour problems in wing clipped birds*

If your bird is clipped when you get him you must keep in mind how this may affect his natural instincts. Birds have two methods of protection "fight or flight". If one of those options is removed then birds will resort to lunging and biting much more readily. In almost all cases, you will get warning signals. The trick is to learn how to recognize them before the beak comes down on your finger (or worse, a lip or an ear).

Keep in mind that in the wild birds can fly high in the trees to avoid danger. A bird with clipped wings obviously cannot do this. Some will fly in a panic to the floor, thrashing about. This can be a very frightening and unsettling experience for both the bird and the owner. When trying to calm or retrieve a bird that has flown to the floor it is best to get down low to where the bird is and not "swoop" down on it the way a predator might in the wild. Talk in a calm voice and ease the bird's panic. Make sure other people in the room are aware the bird is on the floor, so it doesn't get trodden on