

*Full of advice
on caring for
your pet*

Your guide to
**Finches and
Canaries**



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Are you ready?

As the name suggests, canaries originate from the Canary Islands off the west coast of Africa and are a member of the finch family. The most popular varieties are Borders, Yorkshires, Glosters, Rollers, Norwich and Red Factors. They are very colourful birds ranging from yellow, green, brown and red to various pastel shades.



Male canaries (cocks) have the better singing voice than the females (hens). There is no easy way to tell the sex of a canary, so it is best to ask advice before you buy. Canaries can live for up to ten years if they are properly cared for.

Finches and Canaries love it when you talk them

Canaries are great pets for beginners, as they are easy to look after and they will not require too much of your time and attention.

It may take your canary a few weeks to get used to their new surroundings and break out in song as their song can be affected by a change in surroundings.

Where do Finches come from?

The Zebra finch is a native of Australia. The Bengalese finch, however, is not a native of Bengal, but is the product of many years of breeding in captivity. Zebra and Bengalese finches can live in flocks and prefer not to be housed alone. You can either keep them in pairs in cages or in small groups in aviaries. Finches live quite happily with canaries, so you can mix them together however, they have different seed requirements so their individual dietary needs would have to be met.



What to look for?

When selecting your bird, make sure they look bright and alert and are moving around the cage easily. Your bird should have a clean vent area and its feathers should be flush to its body and not fluffed up. Also look out for signs of breathing problems and discharge from the eyes or nostrils.

At home with your Finch or Canary

Bengalese finches, Zebra finches and canaries can be housed in a cage or in an aviary. House them in pairs in a cage, which is large enough to allow your bird to stretch its wings and fly from perch to perch. Finches and canaries can also be kept in flocks in aviaries and will mix well together.

Cages - It is important to get the largest cage possible to allow room for flight to ensure exercise. Your cage should be positioned away from draughts and direct sunlight and avoid damp and humid areas. The bottom of the cage should be lined with sand sheets or cage bird sand to catch the droppings. A removable tray will make cleaning easier. To keep your bird amused, provide plenty of bird toys and perches. Ensure to remove droppings from the cage on a daily basis and thoroughly clean the cage with a bird safe disinfectant once a week. Bengalese and Zebra finches are keen bathers so a bird bath should be provided. Cover the cage at night so you do not disturb or scare them whilst they are sleeping. Fresh water should be provided at all times.

Outside aviaries - Outside aviaries need to have a sheltered area protected from wind, rain and strong sunlight. Try to avoid placing perches directly above seed and water pots. To add further interest to your bird's surroundings, put some non-poisonous wood branches of different widths into the aviary or cage.



Diet

What should I feed my bird? Finches and canaries need a varied diet of cereals, fruit, vegetables and supplements. Your local Jollyes will have a high quality of seed mixtures that they can advise you on.

Fruit and Vegetables - Finches and canaries enjoy lettuce, dandelion and apple. Make sure that they are thoroughly washed before putting them in the cage.

Fine grit - Will help with your birds digestion and should always be provided in the cage.

Mineral block - A mineral block can be used to supplement your bird's food containing essential minerals and cuttlefish which are rich in calcium.

Males sing better than females

Water? Provide fresh clean water at all times.

Health

Colds - If your bird gets a chill then they can catch a cold. This would make him lethargic and cause him to wheeze and his feathers to fluff up. It is important to keep him warm and dry (remove any bird bath) and consult your local vet.

Diarrhoea - Too much green food, mouldy or contaminated food, a change in diet or lack of fresh water can cause this. If your bird has loose droppings, keep him warm and make sure he has plenty of fresh water. Call your local vet if the symptoms persist.

Mites - The most common bird parasite is a red mite, which feeds on birds' blood, causing irritation and weight loss. This can easily be dealt with by spraying your bird with a mite treatment.



Toenails - Regularly check your bird's nails. If they become too long they will catch on the cage wire and can be dangerous to your bird. Extra care must be taken when cutting your birds nails to avoid cutting the blood vessels and nerves. It is best to go to your local vets if you are unsure.

**Finches and
Canaries love to
fly and need a
large cage**

Feather loss - Moulting is a natural process with these birds. It usually takes place during the last few weeks of summer, during which time your bird will probably sing less than usual. Moulting tonics are available to help him grow back his new feathers. If moulting occurs at other times then this is a sign of a cold or being exposed to draughts. Again give him a moulting tonic and keep him warm.

Finches and canaries need stimulus to avoid boredom and frustration, especially a canary on its own, so they will need lots of attention. It is advisable to provide your canary with a companion if they are going to be left on their own for long periods of time during the day. If you are ever worried about your birds health then contact your local vet as soon as possible.



Shopping Checklist

We recommend the following items for your finches or canaries.

Finches and Canaries Checklist

- Cage and cage stand
- Perches
- Cuttlefish
- Suitable food
- Toys
- Mineral block
- Water pot
- Seed pot
- Bath
- Sand/ sand sheets
- Bird safe disinfectant
- Fine bird grit
- A book on finch and canary care

It is now time to enjoy your birds and watch them grow into important members of the family.

For further information contact:

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