



# AVIAN REPTILE & EXOTIC PET HOSPITAL

## LORIKEET - GENERAL HEALTH CARE

### INTRODUCTION

Australia has some of the world's most beautiful lorikeets. The most commonly kept pet lorikeets include the Rainbow Lorikeet, Red-collared Lorikeet (a northern variety of the Rainbow), Scaly-breasted Lorikeet and Musk Lorikeet.

Lorikeets are very intelligent, they can be excellent vocalists and can learn to do tricks. Their calls can be relatively loud and they have frequent watery droppings.

### DIET

Many of the diseases that we see on a regular basis in lorikeets can be avoided with the correct diet and feeding practices. Lorikeets are nectar feeders and do not eat dry seed. Formulated lorikeet mixes can be fed dry, wet and as ice cubes. Feed a good quality lorikeet food, changing it twice daily to prevent bacterial and fungal contamination. Good hygiene practices such as washing feed and water bowls with hot, soapy water daily will reduce the incidence of disease. Placing water and feed bowls up high and above perches will reduce contamination with droppings.

A variety of fruit should be provided on a twice daily basis. This can be frozen on skewers and hung in the cage or fed fresh. Native Foliage: bottlebrush, grevillea, banksia, eucalypts can be given on a daily basis to provide nutrition and behavioural enrichment. Pelleted diets specifically designed for lorikeets can be a beneficial addition to a varied diet but should not be the only food source. Provide clean water daily and provide a larger container to give your bird the opportunity to bathe regularly. Ensure your lorikeet has access to a calcium source such as grit, cuttlebone, a calcium bell or chalk stick. Do not feed avocado or rhubarb leaves or lilies as they are toxic. Make feeding interesting and entertaining by using foraging toys to supply food to your lorikeet.

### HOUSING

Lorikeets can be kept in a larger cage inside, or can be kept in a aviary outside during the day and be brought in at night. Some people keep their birds in aviaries all the time and never bring them into the house.

Aviaries should be clean and dry and protected on 3 sides. Natural eucalypt branches are ideal for perches and lorikeets love to destroy the bark covering them. The doweling wood perches lead to bruising and sores on the bottom of a birds feet.

Do not use rope toys as birds may chew on these and gastrointestinal impactions can develop. Ensure that all metal is stainless steel. Staples, bag ties, nails, screws and wire contain heavy metal and birds should not have access to them as these can cause heavy metal poisoning.

Do not house birds near kitchens or open fires where there could be smoke, gas or cooking fumes.



Rainbow Lorikeet  
(*Trichoglossus haematodus*)

## BEHAVIOUR AND TRAINING PURCHASING

Lorikeets require a lot of social interaction. Single birds require 45 minutes of direct contact time and 3 hours of indirect contact time per day.

Positive reinforcement techniques should be used to gain your bird's trust. Ideally, all family members should take part in training and play time. You want to teach your bird to be part of a flock and develop successful relationships based on trust with different family members. Food rewards can be used as part of training to achieve a 'step-up' and 'step-down' behaviour on to the hand. This can then be built on to ask for behaviours such as coming in and out of the cage.

Do not carry your bird around on your shoulder. This puts them into a situation where aggressive behaviour such as biting may be elicited as you attempt to remove the bird from your shoulder. Remember a relationship with a bird (a prey animal) is based on trust. A first time bird owner will benefit greatly from attending a behaviour and training consultation. This usually begins at the new bird exam. There is a range of books and CDs which can help increase your knowledge about bird behaviour and training.

Behavioural enrichment techniques based on foraging for food and playing with toys which encourage problem solving will help make the bird physically and mentally healthy, reducing the chances of the development of feather destructive behaviour and obesity.

Ideally, start by choosing a healthy young lorikeet from a recommended breeder. Choose a bird that is active and alert. A healthy baby bird will have bright, sparkling eyes that are wide open and free of any discharge. Check the bird's plumage to make sure that it is bright and clean. Check the bird's nares and cere for signs of infection. Observe the bird's living conditions. The bird's enclosure should be clean and free of built up faeces or other potential havens for bacteria.

Ask the specific age of the bird, how their birds are housed and what they are fed. Ask whether the bird was parent fed or hand fed by spoon or crop tube and whether it will require further hand feeding.

## DISEASE PREVENTION

Take your pet lorikeet to the vet for a health check every year. The first check will be the most detailed and should be done within a week of purchase. The vet will tailor health and disease testing for you and your bird and will follow up any specific problems identified on physical examination. Staff can also answer questions on diet, housing and training for your bird.

Screening tests for internal parasites, fungal and bacterial disease as well as testing for psittacosis and psittacine beak and feather disease, are recommended.

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