

Buying Budgies

Should you get two male budgies or two female budgies?

By Linda Rubin

Q: I plan on getting two pet budgies next month and I have read conflicting information on whether it is better to get two males or two females. Which will potentially get along better? I do not plan to breed them. I bought a cage that is 3 feet by 2 feet, so I think they will have good space.

A: Because you do not plan to breed your new budgies, two males are the best combination. Females are notorious for squabbling among themselves. Although there may be exceptions to their bickering, males generally get along better. Often times, males will even practice courting behaviors with one another, such as singing a soft warbling song with intermittent accent notes, while touching beaks or other objects and dilate their eyes. Enthusiastic males may, in their gusty exuberance, even try to mount one another in an attempt to breed. Usually, there is little hostile behavior between males, whereas females can become much more aggressive.

Fortunately, many young budgies can be sexed by the color of their ceres, the horny plate surrounding their nares (nostrils). This area appears blue in males and light tan in females. However, there are exceptions depending upon the budgie's color mutation. Some of the rarer colors (such as recessive "harlequin" pideds, lutinos, albino, or dark-eyed clears, etc.) carry pinkish-purple ceres. Females not in full condition, or younger females may sometimes show a bluish colored cere outlined in white; mature females in full condition have a dark-brown cere denoting breeding condition.

Although the cage you describe is a good size cage for budgies, keep in mind that any cage is, by definition, a limitation in space and restricts exercise. Allow your budgies ample exercise outside the cage on a daily basis.

Initially, wing-feather trims will facilitate the training process until the birds are tame. Young birds, preferably newly weaned at 38 to 42 days of age, tame down quite quickly. Training should be confined to a small room with closed doors and windows and covered mirrors. Work with one bird at a time until both birds are trained. Once tame, allow your budgies time together outside the cage for daily exercise.