

Top 10 Pet Budgie/Parakeet Vet Questions & Answers

Have a vet question about your pet budgie/parakeet? Check out the BirdChannel.com top 10 budgie/parakeet vet answers.

Courtesy Hannah Fenton, Ontario, Canada

A healthy budgie should weigh around 25 to 35 grams.

Top 10 Pet Budgie Vet Questions #6

If I don't clean my pet budgie's water bowl every day or the cage every week, is he at risk?

If you provide water via a water bottle and not a bowl, sanitation becomes much less of an issue, as it is difficult to contaminate water in a bottle. Water should still be changed periodically as nobody, including our pet birds, likes the taste of stale water.

You should still offer your budgie an appropriate-sized bowl of water for bathing purposes periodically, however.

If your pet budgie's cage has a grate in the bottom to collect debris below, you must clean it regularly. Many owners change the paper in the cage bottom daily, but certainly it must be cleaned regularly to prevent organisms from setting up housekeeping and potentially infecting your bird with fungal spores or bacterial organisms. In addition to changing the cage paper in the bottom, from time to time the entire cage should be taken apart and thoroughly cleaned and disinfected, as droppings and bits of food can become adhered to the perches, toys, food bowls or cage bars. The most dangerous material comes from wet cage papers or moldy food that has fallen through the grate.

Top 10 Pet Budgie Vet Questions #7

My pet budgie's beak seems really long. Should I be concerned?

Beaks grow at a consistent rate, and some birds are better than others at naturally wearing down the beak as it grows. Some birds play, using their beak as a third foot, and others will chew through wooden toys, which effectively wears down normal beak growth.

Some birds with liver disease will show an overgrowth of the beak and nails. Blood tests can show if this is the problem or if this is simply a matter of a bird not wearing down the beak as it grows.

Some birds may have a deformity of the beak (either congenital or acquired) that causes it to grow irregularly, often showing one side that grows longer than the other. This will require corrective grinding and filing by an avian veterinarian. Also, a budgie with *Knemidokoptes* mites may also develop an overgrown or misshapen beak that will also require veterinary assistance. When in doubt, check with your avian veterinarian.

Top 10 Pet Budgie Vet Questions #8

How can I tell if my pet budgie is at the right weight?

I always recommend that you purchase a good quality gram scale and get into the habit of weighing your bird on a regular basis. Weight loss or gain should be brought to the attention of your avian veterinarian.

It is difficult to give you the average weight for a pet budgie, as some are smaller birds, and others are longer and taller in stature, and those birds will naturally weigh more than smaller budgies. And English budgies are generally larger birds, and therefore will weigh significantly more than their American counterparts.

One way to determine if your pet budgie is of a good weight is by gently palpating the pectoral muscles on either side of the keel bone. You should feel a good layer of muscle that meets the keel at the midline (middle of the breast area). The muscle and underlying tissue should lie flat against the keel bone and should not bulge out on either side. If it bulges, your bird may be overweight. Concurrently, the muscle on either side of the keel should not cause the keel bone to protrude sharply, as that is a sign that a bird is too thin. Ask your avian veterinarian to help you determine if your budgie is of the correct weight. As an average, I think that a good budgie weight should be between 25 and 35 grams, depending on the body conformation.

Top 10 Pet Budgie Vet Questions #9

My pet budgie is laying lots of eggs. What do I do?

Female budgies are determinate layers, meaning that a hen will usually lay a predetermined number of eggs per clutch. If you take her eggs away from her, however, she may begin another cycle. She will attempt to replace the eggs

that, according to her, a predator removed from her nest. For this reason, it is safest and best to leave her eggs in with her, allowing her to attempt to incubate her eggs. Fertile budgie eggs will usually hatch after 18 days of incubation, and towards the end of this period, she will become bored and nature will tell her to abandon her eggs. Once this occurs, you can safely remove the clutch of eggs and she will again become your happy pet budgie.

Some hens seem more determined than others to become mothers, even if they don't have mates. Handle these budgie hens in a way that doesn't seem as if their human "mates" are attempting to court them! Do not spend too much time cuddling with a hen; you can also attempt to manipulate lighting, as most budgies will be influenced by increasing daylight hours. Try decreasing daylight to approximately eight hours per day, as this may shut off a female's hormones. If your hen has an area where she prefers to nest, remove that nest site or rearrange the cage after the latest clutch has been abandoned to discourage her from laying again.

You can consult with your avian veterinarian about hormone injections to stop a hen from laying eggs. A hen should not lay too many eggs or she may become dangerously calcium depleted and prone to fractured bones, seizures or even death.

Top 10 Pet Budgie Vet Questions #10

Should I have my budgie's wing feathers trimmed?

There are pros and cons to grounding a pet bird, to prevent flight. A bird with trimmed wing feathers is easier to tame. And some birds that have regrown their primary feathers often develop an attitude, becoming more independent and aloof, often choosing to fly away rather than be put back in a cage, for example.

A flighted bird is at great risk for inadvertently escaping out of an open door or window. A bird can be injured flying into a window or mirror, or if closed in an open door (from a bird perching on the top of an open door).

Wing-feather trimming is as painless as getting a haircut. Several methods of trimming flight feathers exist to allow a bird to gently glide to the ground and not fall like a ton of bricks. I recommend trimming flight feathers for pet birds, unless specific special circumstances indicate that a bird needs the ability to fly (to escape predators or for weight loss, for example).