

Pet Bird Cage Trends

Check out the latest trends for pet bird cages and pet bird housing.

By Rose Gordon

Make sure the bar spacing on a bird cage is correct for your bird's species.

Like the colossal McMansions dotting suburban landscapes throughout the United States, bird cages have gotten bigger in the last decade, even the last five years. Avian-only stores applaud this trend in bird cages. "Best size for your bird? There's no limit as to how big," said Richard Horvitz, president of Golden Cockatoo in Florida. "A cage can never be too big, but bar spacing can be too wide," he added.

Kathy Lance, co-owner of Bird Paradise in New Jersey, agrees. "Being owned by a companion parrot is an everyday responsibility, and in that regard, we need to provide optimal housing appropriate for a particular species," she said. "Optimal is in, minimal is out."

Going large isn't just for the big birds. "Years ago, wrought iron was really only for larger size birds," said Todd Marcus Birds Exotic's in New Jersey. "What we've really seen a lot of is more smaller wrought iron cages for cockatiels, conures, etc."

Consumers demanding larger bird cages continue to fuel the go-large trend in bird cages. "Parrot owners are much more educated than 20 years ago," Jack Lance, co-owner of Bird Paradise, said. "Based on that evolution in education, cages have definitely increased in size."

"Many people are buying the right cage for their bird rather than putting their Amazon in a small round cage hanging from the ceiling," added Meghan Barrette, manager of Bird House of Montague in Florida.

Pet bird stores endorse this turnaround. If it comes down to price, Ira Hertz, of Bird Jungle in New York, recommends his customers still size up but with a more economic model. "I encourage size over construction," he said. To encourage them, he frequently offers a discount on cages to new bird owners.

Frugal New England shoppers at Allen Fox's Bird Supply of New Hampshire frequently buy bird cages based on price. "Cost is probably the first thing people look at," he said. Fox encourages them to look for a well-made bird cage that might cost more but will last longer.

On the other hand, HGTV devotees and others who have invested extra dollars in their homes might want to spend more on their birds' homes. "People are getting more décor conscious," Horvitz said. After choosing a particular sized bird cage, his customers look for style first, color next and then price.

"They want it to fit into their living room décor," said David Lombard of the Bird Farm in Ohio. To fit their homes' interior design, many bird cage buyers make the color and style of the bird cage a priority. "We sell a lot of white," Lombard said.

Martha Stewart wannabes appreciate the move toward beautification.

"A cage no longer has to be a big ugly cube that is awkwardly placed in your home," said James Fernandez, avian specialist at Bird House of Montague in Florida. "It can now look good."

Looking good has led to an array of color options, Victorian styling and bird cages that look more like a piece of furniture than a small animal housing option.

In Florida, where half-a-million-dollar condos have become the norm, Alfredo Ona, of Simbad's Bird House in Miami, thinks that many pet bird owners are willing to spend a little extra. "I don't think price will be an objection if the quality and construction are good," said Ona who has been in the exotic bird business since the early 1980s.

Others agree. "People are more willing to spend the money to get quality," Joseph Bornheimer of The Parrot's Cove in Texas added. "They're a little more cautious with rising gas prices," he added, but this could be a good trend if it causes them to "investigate" their choice more.

Luxe Options

Like today's car manufacturers, bird cage designers are piling on the options to fit people's changing lifestyles. Pat Riddle, co-owner of Parrotville Bird Shop in Ohio, has been in business since 1987, and she remembers when cage selection consisted of a wrought iron cage built for macaws, "black, of course," she said. Now, "everyone wants seedguards," she said.

Today's bird cage add-ons include extra feeders — three or four is becoming standard, says Bornheimer — seedguards, clear doors, multiple entry points, locks, built-in cabinets and embedded or zero hardware.

"Customers are loving it," Barrette said. "It's like adding an MP3 player and heated seats to a car. It's the little things that make all the difference."

Not all retailers are carrying bird cages with acrylic or see-through doors, but those that were liked it a whole lot.

"Cages with all acrylic fronts make for an all new experience of admiring birds," said Fernandez. "Bars give the feeling of imprisonment. With the acrylic there is an illusion of no barrier."

This addition also keeps the dust and mess level down, according to Lombard.

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