

## Boarding vs. Bird-Sitters

### The advantages and disadvantages of boarding and bird-sitting

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White-bellied caique  
Courtesy Catherine Balkin, New York

We gave you the Bird-Sitter Checklist in the March 2008 issue of BIRD TALK magazine. Let's now look at the difference between boarding your bird and having a bird-sitter.

There are good arguments for each, but ultimately the choice depends on your preferences and your bird's requirements and personality.

#### BOARDING

Will you board your bird at a pet store, veterinarian's office or at a private boarding facility, such as someone's home?

##### Advantages to boarding:

The bird will be in the midst of activity for eight 8 to 10 hours a day. Gregarious birds often enjoy the hubbub!

It's easy to transport one or two birds for boarding.

Personnel will be able to observe the bird on a regular basis during the day.

The bird will likely be on a regular schedule depending on store/boarding facility hours.

When boarded at a vet's office, the bird will have access to immediate medical care during business hours.

A bird with special needs can be accommodated at a bird store or vet's office.

Food may be included in boarding fees.

You can often pay for boarding services with a credit card.

##### Considerations:

Shy or phobic birds may be upset by the constant activity when boarded.

Birds are exposed to germs from other birds. Some stores board only birds that have been purchased there or require vet-issued health certificates prior to boarding. Ask about requirements. Are boarding birds kept separately than birds for sale? What sanitary precautions are taken by personnel when handling boarding birds?

If you have multiple birds, it may be unwieldy to transport them for boarding.

In most cases, birds will be unattended overnight. Ask if the boarding facility has a monitored alarm system.

The boarding facility's hours may not be compatible with the time of your return. Determine the official open hours when making preliminary arrangements.

#### IN-HOME BIRD SITTER

Will your bird sitter come in once or twice a day or sleep overnight in your home? Be aware that most sleep over bird sitters will not be there around the clock. They may have other clients to service during the day.

##### Advantages:

Your bird remains in the security of its own home.

The bird's regular schedule can be maintained.

There will be no exposure to other birds. (If your sitter has other avian clients, ask your bird sitter about sanitary procedures between client calls. Leave hand sanitizer and plenty of paper towels for his/her use.)

You won't have the inconvenience of moving your bird to another location.

Your home will be regularly checked, the mail brought in, etc.

Your bird will stay on its regular diet.

Your bird sitter may offer other services, such as watering plants, caring for other pets, logging phone messages, etc.

A good bird sitter will be able to spend some social time with your bird.

The birds will already be there when you get home.

##### Considerations:

Are you uncomfortable having someone in your home? If so, an in-home pet sitter may not be for you. Remember to check references and accreditations and have a back-up person to check on your home periodically while you are away.

Your bird may be alone more than usual. Some birds are happy to be alone; others are not. This is an individual consideration.

Extreme weather may prevent your sitter from getting to your home on time. Ask how he or she deals with such situations. Your bird will have to be transported to the vet in case of sudden illness or emergency.