

## A Look At Pet Canaries

**Canaries are friendly pet birds, known for their singing, colors and body types.**

*By Karl Lieberman*

Canaries can become friendly pet birds.

Life with birds isn't limited to bird species like Amazon parrots and budgies (parakeets). Many bird enthusiasts have discovered the joy of non-hookbill bird species like canaries.

### Canary Types

Because canaries have been domesticated for centuries and bred into hundreds of distinct varieties, no basic description applies. In only a few of these varieties are there obvious differences between males and females, though only males sing. All of today's canaries are bred for one of three primary characteristics: color, song type or body form (type canaries).

**Color types:** The most well-known color-bred canary is the red factor canary. Many years ago, a domestic female canary was bred to a wild Venezuelan red siskin in order to introduce the possibility of creating red canaries. Once the red bird's color gene was introduced into the resulting babies, many years of selective breeding have resulted in today's red series canaries. There are many variations of red factor canary including frosted mosaic, bronze intensive and red agate. Other color bred canaries include: Ino, opal and melanin.

**Song Canaries:** All male canaries sing, but some varieties are bred for a specific type of song. Some of the better known song types are the American singer canary, the Spanish timbrado canary and the German roller canary. American singer canaries are produced to have a sweet and moderate song. Spanish timbrado canaries have a powerful and slightly metallic song, while the German roller canary has a gentle and varied "rolling" one. The average pet store canary's song will be variable. Some canaries will be excellent singers and others not as inspirational.

**Body form (type) Canaries:** Birds bred for specific body types are usually a more specialized interest. Yorkshire canaries are bred to have an extremely broad head and chest that sharply tapers to a very slim lower body. This gives the bird a distinctive "upside down comma." The Parisian frill canary is bred to have an exaggeratedly straight and tall posture with bizarre curly feathering. And strangest of all is the Scotch fancy canary with its humped back and long, down-curving neck. The final oddity to this type is its tiny, almost snake-like head.

### Canaries As Pets

Canaries often become very personable and friendly. In some rare cases, pet canaries can even become finger tame. Canaries have been a favorite pet bird for ages because of their lovely appearance, wonderful songs and their cheerful and lively disposition that never fails to please. Female birds make equally good pets but do not sing and are usually less expensive

### Care and Feeding:

Canaries need at least 24 inches of unobstructed horizontal space for flying. They love all sorts of small toys. Mirrors are not recommended for canaries, however, as they can lead to certain behavioral problems.

Canaries need a canary seed mix as a base diet but will also eagerly eat all sorts of vegetables, greens, fruits and cooked grains. Whole-grain bread, cooked pasta and chopped hardboiled egg are also excellent choices for pet canaries.