



# DOVE CARE

## BACKGROUND

**Average Size:** 10 inches

**Average Lifespan:** 10 - 15 years

- Coo rather than squawk
- Generally gentle and reserved
- Not as social with their human caretakers as other species
- Will need a ground cage vs. a flight cage

## COST

When you first get your bird, you'll need to spend about \$75 for a cage. Food runs about \$75 a year, plus \$30 annually for toys and treats.

## DIET

- Grit and Gravel: Because they eat seeds whole, doves need grit and gravel. The little stones and the grit help grind up harder seed in the gizzard.
- Fresh, cold water should be available at all times. One of the best ways to provide water for doves is to use a so-called 'automatic' waterer, an upside down container that feeds into a tray type base.
- Offer fresh veggies and fruits to your bird every day.
  - **Recommended:** Dark, leafy greens, carrots, broccoli, apples, pears, melon and kiwi. *Take care to remove any uneaten food after a couple of hours.*
  - **Avoid:** avocado, cherry pits, rhubarb and apple seeds and anything that's old or spoiled.

## DAILY CARE

- Remove and replace the paper lining the bottom of the cage every day.
- Clean and refill the water bottle and water bowl every day.
- Clean cage completely once a week by replacing dirty bedding and scrubbing down the cage with warm, soapy water.

## GENERAL CARE

- A thorough cleaning of your pet's cage is required once weekly. Remove and wash the cage tray and perches, and wash the area around the cage. Make sure all toys are clean and damage-free, without loose or broken parts that could hurt your pet. You'll want to clean the entire cage with a disinfectant solution. Rinse well, and dry everything before returning your bird to his cage.
- You can help keep your pet's plumage looking perfect with a bath as often as he likes it. You can use a spray bottle filled with water and give your bird a shower or you can put a shallow dish at the bottom of the cage and see what happens.

## CAGE & ENVIRONMENT

- In all cases the size of the dove determines the size of its home; they must be able to flap their wings without hitting the sides of the cage. The minimum size for a dove cage should be no less than 24 inches wide, 16 inches deep and 20 inches tall. However it's always recommended to get the largest cage you can afford.
- The bottom of the cage should be a flat surface (not wire) since many doves spend a good deal of time on the ground.
- To prevent escape or injury, the bars on the cage should be no more than .5 inches apart—a little larger than the tips of your fingers.
- Line the bottom of the cage with plain paper, newspaper, paper towels or paper bags cut to size.
- Most doves and pigeons are seed eaters and thus ground dwellers. They like to walk around and will roost higher up. Some are free flyers that like to travel around. All these birds will need flight space.
- Provide at least one perch (a little way above the floor) for your dove to roost on.
- Place the cage off the floor in a warm, bright part of the house, close to where the action is but away from all drafts and direct sunlight.

➢ *Avoid setting up the cage in or near the kitchen at all costs - Birds are extremely sensitive to fumes and those from self-cleaning ovens and Teflon-coated cookware, if overheated, can be fatal.*

## EXERCISE & TOYS

- Even though doves generally do not take to handling and do not need time out every day, they will appreciate a revolving selection of toys.
- Doves may enjoy straw wreaths, foraging toys, and mirrors with bells.
- Check out what's available at the pet supply store, and just make sure that the toys you select are safe and appropriate for your bird's size and species. They should be labeled accordingly, but don't hesitate to ask if you are unsure.

## SIGNS OF ILLNESS

- Take your birds to the veterinarian annually for check-ups. Please don't wait to schedule an appointment if you think your pet is sick. A bird who is not feeling well may fluff out his feathers or sit quietly on the floor of his cage with his eyes closed. Other symptoms that something's not right with your pet include a change in the consistency, frequency or color of droppings, weight loss or gain, sneezing, coughing, blocked nostrils, labored breathing and a crusty beak or eyes.





# DOVE SUPPLY CHECKLIST

- Well-constructed cage, at least 24 inches wide, 16 inches deep and 20 inches tall, with several perches
- High-quality pellet dove food
- Grit and gravel
- Plain paper, newspaper, paper towels or paper bags cut to size
- Species-appropriate safe toys
- Water bowl for cage floor

