



# How to Choose Your First Lovebird Wisely

E-book on the Feathered Family: All about Lovebirds

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# INTRODUCTION

***So.....you finally decided to buy a Lovebird.***

There are certain truths about Lovebirds that you must accept when you buy the first Lovebird. Contrary to popular beliefs, not every Lovebird will automatically mimic sounds they hear. Don't be disheartened if your Lovebird does not start immediately. You can always initialize the talking process. Teach your Lovebird to 'speak' if it does not imitate your speech on its own. Lovebirds being America's third most popular pet (after cats and dogs), there are millions like you who are highly interested to teach their Lovebird to talk, imitate human speech and do wonderful things at home.

“Living with Lovebirds” gives you a crystal-clear insight into a life with Lovebirds. This acts as a complete guide and is for those who are interested in owning, maintaining and training these colorful bundle of feathers. This manual is meant for both novices and experienced bird lovers, and can help you take wise decisions while buying a Lovebird. Moreover, this is a treasure trove of information for taking care of and maintaining your new bird in terms of diet and health issues. You will also discover some very useful tips on behavioral problems that your Lovebird may show signs of. And remember, you must be prepared to deal with minor to severe behavioral disorders. Don't think you are the only Lovebird owner in the world who is facing such problems. Lovebirds and problems sometimes go hand in hand but there are fantastic remedies available. All in all, you can become a pro in dealing with these colorful and lively birds. In our introduction to different Lovebird species, you will discover a wealth of choices that you can make while buying your Lovebird. Every Lovebird species will not suit your lifestyle and vice versa. This handy manual is designed to give



practical and useful advice to those who wish to know more about choosing a Lovebird. It also contains advice on feeding, health care, and the behavioral traits of these birds. So, welcome to the colorful world of Lovebirds!

## **IT'S A LOVEBIRD'S WORLD**

Lovebirds make absolutely priceless pets, and are known for their skill at mimicking sounds. They are an owner's delight because they are highly sociable creatures. They are also capable of learning many tricks, making them both popular and entertaining pets.

Let's strap ourselves to a time-machine and travel a few thousand years back to know everything about Lovebirds. Paleontologists hold that some Lovebird species date back to 30 million years and many people believe that the first known bird was Archaeopteryx.

Lovebirds have an archaic lineage, which explains their natural majestic body language. They bear no close resemblance to any other species. However, they are thought to have some link with pigeons and doves.

## **Life Cycle of the Lovebird**

Despite their sociable nature, most Lovebird species are very strict, in the moral sense. They do not make multiple mates and are usually family-oriented. This is one very distinctive aspect of a Lovebird's life cycle. Most Lovebirds prefer to raise their babies in existing tree hollows where they build a warm and comfortable nest for shelter and safety. Maternal affection and concern come



naturally to them. Usually, they nibble off the lumber inside a tree cavern to carve out a spongy surface, on which the female Lovebirds lay their spawns. Their sharp beaks come of help when they excavate holes in banks, cliff faces or termite mounds. Female Lovebirds usually lay small batches of eggs on alternate days, and only then they get ready for the incubation of eggs. The young are naked when they are born, with no hair or feathers. So, special care and affection are vital. It is heart-warming to see Lovebirds taking care of their newly hatched babies. No wonder, they respond so well to human affection!

## **Watch Them Grow In a Distinct Social Environment**

Lovebirds tend to be a very sociable species. Pair bonding is the in-thing among them, and young Lovebirds (like our own youngsters) may select their lifetime cohorts before maturity. With the exception of the breeding season, Lovebirds do not tend to be particularly territorial in nature. They are seen in flocks of small groups or, sometimes, thousands in number. Just close your eyes and imagine the sight. Hundreds of colorful Lovebirds across a clear blue sky would give you a glimpse of Heaven from earth. Given the fact that Lovebirds are largely nomadic, they fly really fast and make full use of all the natural resources they come across, sans competition. Thus, flying in flocks can be seen as a safety measure against predators. Research on and careful observation of mannerisms and habits of the species show that some Lovebirds even post 'guards' to raise alarm when they sense imminent danger. They have different calls for different purposes such as soft contact calls, alert calls, or calls made to take off. You experience these sights and sounds only in natural surroundings.

In captivity, Lovebirds have no choice but to take man as a flock-social partner. This can explain why many of the species can be easily taught to imitate human



sound. Whether or not a direct correlation exists between Lovebirds' amiable natures and their ability to mimic human words, has been an unresolved issue of age-old debates. This is the x-factor that makes birds capable of speaking. However, you should remember that like dogs or cats, Lovebirds too have varying characteristics and personalities. Don't expect your Lovebird to behave in the same manner as your Lovebirds. It will be your mistake, not theirs.

## Buying your First Lovebird

The golden rule is: NEVER BUY ON IMPULSE

You may be buying your very first bird, or perhaps you are looking for a companion bird for your present pet. Either way, a little brain-racking and research can go a long way. You should weigh all options carefully in order to get the Lovebird that would suit you, your family and your lifestyle. You must assess the personality and behavioral patterns of the Lovebird to decide if it is right for you. This is a crucial aspect in the process of buying your bird. Lovebirds are intelligent birds and have very distinct temperaments and behave differently to different situations. Some Lovebirds are naturally adaptive and will adjust to your surroundings in days. On the other hand, some Lovebirds are moody and ill-tempered. They will take time to agree with your home environment. However, don't lose patience. Step into your Lovebird's shoes...err..claws and think. Even you will need time to like a new house!

When you go to a retailer to choose your Lovebird, keep both your ears and eyes open. Listen to what the seller has to say. Also, watch the Lovebird's behavior closely. This can be done easily when the Lovebirds are kept in individual cages. If you are looking for a Lovebird that can be easily tamed and trained, it is best to choose a hand-raised Lovebird. This type of bird may cost more, but in the long run, you will realize they will be worth the money. This is because they are



already used to human techniques of caring and affection. If you are looking for a cheaper option, you may want to buy a second-hand bird. This means you are bringing home a bird that has been brought up in a completely different environment. There are equal advantages and disadvantages in the case of second-hand Lovebirds. The advantage is, you may not need too much time to train and tame it since it is already used to human voices and gestures. The disadvantage is this. It may be very difficult to inculcate new habits and behavior patterns in your feathered friend. Exercise immense patience and tolerance while teaching your second-hand Lovebird.

But as a first time buyer, I would advise you not to not to choose by prices. What is the point if you get a cheap Lovebird and spend hundreds or even thousands on treating its behavioral problems? Instead, you should go to an experienced breeder or a pet store and spend more to buy a healthy and happy Lovebird. As a responsible pet owner, the heartbreak of watching a beloved pet die is not worth the few extra dollars you might save while buying one. The following are the most popular and the most sought after places when it comes to buying your Lovebird.

## Pet Stores

One of the most reliable places to buy your pet from, these pet shops are easy to locate. The best thing about the birds in these pet stores is most of them are bought from breeders. However, there are exceptions. You may not find the information provided by the owner or the staff unsatisfactory. Or, even worse, the living conditions of the birds may be pathetic. The cages, the floor and the store as a whole may be unclean and may stink of dried faeces or rotten food. Say no immediately and go to the next pet store. You may have to pay more for a bird from a clean and well-maintained pet store. But if you are looking for a healthy and high quality Lovebird, it's worth paying more!



## **Bird Specialty Stores**

Pet stores that deal specifically with birds and bird products are the ideal choice for you because their reputation and profit depend on the quality of the birds they sell. Usually, bird specialty stores keep good quality Lovebirds. This is primarily because devoted and committed bird lovers run these bird specialty stores. You can rely on the information provided by them about the birds. In most cases, the owner may have procured his birds from a reputed breeder, which means that the birds may be bred-on-site or hand raised. This in turn means they are healthy and well-fed birds and are not likely to develop behavioral problems.

## **Breeders**

If you decide to buy your bird directly from a breeder, you will find there are two kinds of bird breeders. Some people breed birds out of love and they want to share the lovely bundle of feathers with like-minded people. Others see breeding only as a money-making business. When dealing with 'live' wares, this can cause problems as the breeder's ethics (or lack of them) directly affects the birds. Before you decide to buy a Lovebird, try and arrange a visit to the breeding facilities and talk to the breeder. You should see the coops and the baby area. Also, contact other people who have bought birds from the same breeder. Call them and find out before you make your purchase.

## **Newspaper**

Newspapers also help a lot when it comes to finding a variety of birds. However, buying through a newspaper can be risky at times, particularly for the inexperienced and the first-time buyers of Lovebirds. Although you can pick from birds of all categories and ages, there are some conventions you must follow.

Those interested in buying a baby bird should definitely pay a visit to the





breeding facility. However, if you are looking for an older Lovebird, you must assess its behavioral history and vet/ medical history. This will arm you against potential problems in the future that may surface once you buy the bird.

## Rescue Groups

Rescue groups take in unwanted Lovebirds that have suffered from medical or behavioral problems. It is unfortunate that these poor birds are left to themselves by their human owners once they develop behavioral problems. These birds are then put up for adoption. They are considered for those that meet the strict adoption criteria set by these rescue groups. Most rescue groups will want you to take bird-care classes with them before they hand over a bird to you. Note this. You are willingly bringing home an older bird, which may bring its own problems along with it. The advantage of this situation is if you experience any problem with the bird after taking it home, you can seek support from the rescue organization. They will be glad to provide help, support and advice.

## Cost of raising a Lovebird

Lovebirds are high maintenance pets, and may cost more than you have imagined. If you are under the impression purchasing the bird is the only cost involved in beginning a life with Lovebirds, think again. Following is the list of the initial expenses you have to bear once you have bought the Lovebird of your choice.:

1. You will need to buy a comfortably large cage (according to the size of your Lovebird), the price of which can be anything between \$250 and \$1000 depending on the quality of the cage. Minimum cage size should be 3-4 wingspans wide and 2-3 wingspans in depth. If your Lovebird has to stay several hours in its coop, it will need a cage much bigger than itself,



so that it can easily move and play in it.

2. The cost of entertainment paraphernalia for your pet, such as play gyms, swings and other toys will cost approximately \$100 to \$400. You can use lynching play-gyms and tree stands around your quarters to give your Lovebird some freedom, training and useful exercise.
3. Toys are a must for your Lovebird, especially if you cannot give too many hours to it everyday. Toys are good companions and they do not allow Lovebirds to get bored. You have to spend \$50 to \$150 for decent toys for your Lovebird.

Add food and medical expenses so that you can calculate your approximate annual financial commitment to a Lovebird. Weigh both options: a little expense in the initial stage against a whole life of fun and laughter. This will also show your love and sense of commitment to your pet.



## Essentials of Buying a Lovebird

Once you have decided where you want to buy your Lovebird from, you should arm yourself with some vital facts.

Cleanliness should be of numero uno in your to-do list when you decide to get a bird. When you visit the store, the first thing that should ring the warning bell is a strong stench of urine and feces. This means the birds and the animals in the store are not cleaned properly by the owners. This points to the lack of care and negligence towards hygiene. Look into the bird cages yourself. If you find filth heaps at the bottom of the birdcage or on the perches, it clearly indicates the birds are just not looked after. The owners are least bothered about the safety and hygiene of the birds. Leave the bird store immediately. Lovebirds that are not kept clean will be prone to diseases and infections.

The water bowl is another indication of the health of Lovebirds. If the water looks swampy, it hasn't been changed for a long time. If the food/water cup is empty, it shows the poor diet the Lovebird is on. The owners are just not concerned about the health of the Lovebirds.

The Lovebirds may show signs of the terrible conditions that they are living in. Look out for signs of sickness and disease. They may appear puffed up and heavy-eyed, with dull and lifeless feathers. As an inexperienced Lovebird owner, you may not know the symptoms of a sick or unhealthy bird, but the chances of getting a healthy bird here are rare. Therefore, avoid such stores.

A quality place will take proper care of its birds. You will see a marked difference in how the birds are kept, fed and looked after. The very sight of this place will tell you that the birds and their cages are kept clean, and that there is always an adequate supply of granular food and water. Good stores tend to supplement



their birds' diets with human food for good nutrition. This is essential to ensure a long and healthy life. A seed and water diet may ultimately have an adverse effect on the health of the bird.

## How to decide on a good pet

Now that you know WHERE you should look for a healthy Lovebird, you need to know HOW you will decide on the Lovebird species that will suit your lifestyle. As a serious bird lover, you have to do your homework. If you have read the Living with Lovebirds handbook, and you still have questions, ask the storekeeper to get the correct information. If you are unlucky, you will only get professional and business-minded one-liners to ensure a sale. Here is one of my articles that has appeared in many websites. Follow the rules and you will end up buying the right Lovebird for yourself and your family.

Which Lovebird is right for me? This is a question that you must ask yourself before you think of keeping these lovely birds as pets. It is as important as your decision to have a child. You need to ask - which Lovebird is right for me - because every Lovebird has its distinctive temperament and nature. No two Lovebirds are alike.

Lovebirds need a lot of attention and love to become adorable pets. Once they bond with you, you will realize how precious they are as pets. Choose your Lovebird according to your lifestyle.

### **10 Commandments for choosing the right Lovebird for your household:**

- **No Impulse Shopping** : Try not to adopt or purchase a pet on a whim or inspiration. Make it a deliberate, thought-out action
- **Shop Around** : Take the time to learn all about the kind of pet you are



considering for yourself.

- **Visit The Humane Society And Animal Rescue Organization** : Pay a few walk-through trips to your local humane society. Just observe the pet when it is alone with you and try to make a mental list of its positive and negative points.
- **Match Your Pet To Your Life Style** : Do you work long hours? Do you have children? Are they mature enough not to be a threat to the pet you choose? If you travel a lot who will care for the pet while you are away?
- **Match Your Pet To Your Home Environment** : How much free space is there? Is there a back yard? Is it fenced? How will your neighbors feel about this new pet? If you rent, what will your landlord think about this pet?
- **Decide Why You Want A Pet** : Is this pet going to be a child substitute? Do you want to teach it tricks and interact with it? Do you want to play with it and caress it? Your personality traits are very important.
- **Decide If This Is The Right Time In Your Life To Get A Pet** : Frankly consider if this is really the right time in your life to own a (another) pet. If you already have other pets how will they get along with the new one? How stable are your human relationships? How good is your health?
- **Decide How Long You Want Your Pet To Live** : Small Lovebirds live 8-14 years; larger ones 35-60 years.
- **Decide If You Are Able To Meet This Pet's Specific Needs** : It is a good idea to do some research at the library as to how much care your pet



will need and visit pet owners. Do you have enough time to properly feed and clean for it? Many pets get bored if they do not have enough one-on-one contact. This boredom can lead to a host of undesirable behaviors.

- **Cost** : Besides the initial cost of the pet you may incur considerable expense in purchasing the pet a suitable cage. Over time, the cost of a good diet will far exceed whatever you paid for the Lovebird. It may need veterinary exceed whatever you paid for the Lovebird.

The main species are:

- Lovebirds.
- Lovebirds
- Lovebirdlets

Ask yourself again - which Lovebird is right for me? All Lovebirds need time and patience to make wonderful pets. Some Lovebirds are cheerful all the time, some are often moody. Some play on their own, while some always demand your company. These birds can make your life beautiful and chirpy, but they can also die of heartaches. Think hard before you make your choice!

## Are You Buying Someone Else's Lovebird?

Are you planning to buy a second-hand Lovebird? Whether you get one from a rescue group or from previous owners who no longer want their pets, you should be prepared for behavior problems in your Lovebirds and you have to solve them somehow. Therefore, it is imperative that you have as much information as possible from the previous owner about the bird's history, sex, diet, caging, favorite toys, and details of its sleeping habits, i.e., whether the cage was covered at night or not. Just as experiences of a human child in his/her childhood shape his personality, similarly a Lovebird's experiences in its formative years help to shape its personality. And learning its past history will help you



understand his needs and behavior in a better way.

When you take in a bird that has been brought from another house, your expectations about its compatibility with you and vice versa should not be too high. The behavioral problems of the Lovebird can worsen by the stress of having to leave it's home, having to adapt to new conditions in a new house, and having to form new attachments. This can take a toll on your nerves too, especially if this is your first pet Lovebird. And the fact that bird-owners wishing to give up a Lovebird are often not very honest about the behavioral problems of the bird can add to your pathetic plight. Before deciding to adopt a second-hand pet, it would be advisable to:

- 1 Have prior experience in dealing with young Lovebirds. So, it is better for first time Lovebird owners to buy from pet stores or breeders.
- 2 Empathize with the behavioral differences between a sexually mature and an infant Lovebird. Well, wouldn't you accept the difference between a teen boy busy impressing girls and an infant? Wouldn't their attitude to food be different?
- 3 Be prepared to seek professional support when required. Don't be shy to tell people you are ignorant. Your forthrightness may save lives!
- 4 Have a deep sense of steadfastness to keep the Lovebird despite all the difficulties. Wise men say, walking out is the easiest thing to do. Living with a problem and finding solutions for it is the biggest challenge and the greatest thrill of life.

Sometimes, the behavioral problems in second-hand Lovebirds occur because of poor diet, inadequate rest, unhappy or non-conducive environments, or scarce attention. These problems may disappear in a new environment, but your Lovebird will take time to get used to better conditions. Surprisingly, some Lovebirds have no behavior problems. They lose home for no reason other than



lack of devotion on the part of the owner. You must, therefore, accept that like other pets, a second-hand Lovebird also needs unconditional commitment when you bring it home. Love it with your heart and you will realize the true essence of being loved.

## **Choosing the Breeder Is Important**

Communication with the breeder (from whom you have bought your Lovebird) should continue even after you bring the Lovebird home. Initially, it is the breeder who knows and understands your Lovebird much more than you do. The breeder should share your love and respect for birds, even if he is not a very renowned one. If he adores and loves birds, he will be able to share valuable insight with you about your Lovebird's behavior patterns and taming tricks. So, take time to select the right breeder. Make sure that you share a comfortable relationship with him and he is ready to help you with advice and active support.

## **Be an Informed Buyer**

Before we move on to the next topic, let's go through what we have discussed so far. Do your homework well before buying a Lovebird as your pet. Ask friends. Check the Internet. Read as much as possible to become an informed buyer. You are likely to make lesser mistakes while choosing your Lovebird. There is a whole treasure-house of facts on bird ownership out there. Learn from other bird owners and the breeder. They should be having tons of information. Select the genus of the Lovebird and the stubble-jumper carefully. Just before making the move, think again. Do you really want a Lovebird in your life? Only if you are dead serious about it, go for it. Don't play with another life.





## Working with Fearful Lovebirds

Since many Lovebirds have been re-settled in recent times, it is not unusual that they have developed a phobia of human beings. If you own a fearful bird, begin by interacting at its emotional level. Assure it is absolutely safe, not only psychologically, but also physically. Try to instill the feeling of love, security and affection in your Lovebird. You need to understand that it is not easy for him to adjust to a new environment. It will take time to trust you and bond with you. Be patient and don't expect too much from your bird from the very beginning. Anything that horrifies the bird and makes it feel disabled should be avoided as much as possible to ensure steady progress in your relationship with your bird.

The best way to deal with this situation is to let the bird settle down on its own and find out comfortable locations in its new surroundings. Any real behavioral vocation should be kept away until his confidence in you and/or your family has been established. In its new environment, it will get nervous and pre-existing manners (if any), such as repeated biting, blaring ness, feather picking or overanxious behavior will look larger than what it is in reality.

These behavioral problems are the result of nasty experiences with previous owners. You may never know what caused this sad and unfortunate change in your Lovebird. Don't misunderstand its behavior. It is a physical manifestation of his nervousness. Observe the occasions on which your Lovebird loses control and bites or screams. Next, try to calm it down. Be as tender as possible. Remember, it needs your love and patience the most. A definite no-no is to place the Lovebird above your eye level. This arouses aggression in your Lovebird. No one knows why.



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