

PET TALES

Home tweet home

Bigger is better when choosing a bird cage

By DR. MARTY BECKER & GINA SPADAFORI
Universal Press Syndicate

Nothing is more important to your bird than the cage you buy and where you put it.

You want your bird to be safe and feel secure in his cage. He should also feel included as part of the family, even when he's confined. A proper cage — well-designed, large, and made of safe and sturdy materials — and proper placement can achieve all these goals.

A good rule of thumb on size is to choose the next cage larger from what the labeling says. Your cockatiel will be far happier in a cage designed for a small parrot, for example. If you can afford it, go even bigger, but make sure the bar spacing isn't so wide that your pet can get his head caught.

Look for smooth welds and no paint chipping. Your bird will be working as best he can to destroy his cage, so you don't want him breaking off any toxic pieces.

Choose a location where your bird can be adjacent to family activities but not in the center of them. A bird will feel most comfortable if his cage is against a wall, so he can watch the goings-on without having to worry about anyone sneaking up on him. For

the same reason, place the cage where your bird cannot be frightened — for example, away from large furniture that may block his view of the room, and the coming and going of family and friends. Birds don't like to be startled.

Position the cage far enough away from a window that direct sun rays don't fall on your bird and possibly overheat him, since he cannot escape. Putting the cage near (as opposed to next to) a window so your bird can see out isn't a bad idea, though, especially if the window overlooks a changing panorama that can help keep your pet entertained.

Although the kitchen may seem like an ideal place for your bird's cage, it's really not a good idea. The potential for your bird to breathe deadly fumes, such as those from overheated nonstick cookware, is too high in the kitchen. These products can kill your bird before you even realize there's a problem.

Probably the best place to situate your bird's home is the family room or any other place, aside from the kitchen, where the people in your home hang out.

After choosing the location, set up the cage. Two or three well-chosen toys are a must to keep your bird busy. Use a variety of natural (cleaned tree branches) and store-bought perches, and be sure to position them so they aren't directly over food and water dishes. You don't want to encourage your bird to poop into his dishes.

Line the cage bottom to make cleanup



Pet birds spend most of their time in their cages, so they should be as spacious as possible.

easy, and you're ready to introduce your bird to his new home. Don't be surprised if he reacts with horror, though. It's only natural.

You can help your bird conquer his anxiety by putting the new cage next to the old one for a few days if possible so your bird can observe it. Even if the new cage is his first and you have no choice but to put him directly into it, be patient and understanding during the transitional period. Your bird will soon be enjoying his new environment. ■

Pet of the Week



>>Beatrice (#416905) is a 2-year-old beagle mix, was found as a stray. She's a quiet little girl with a striking brindle and white coat who loves attention and enjoys walks, people and other dogs. She'd be an ideal companion for someone who wants a smaller pet.



>>Latté (#417034) is a one-year girl, Latté (#417034) is a grey kitty with white on her feet and mouth. She was found as a stray. She's a very pretty girl who loves to be cuddled and would be content to laze about but would also welcome attention.

To adopt a pet

There are many dogs and cats available at Lee County Animal Services, 5600 Banner Drive, Fort Myers. Call 533-7387 or visit the agency's Web site at www.leelostpets.com, which is updated throughout the day. Adoption applications may be downloaded from the site or completed at the shelter, which is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. Please use the animal's ID number when inquiring about it. Adoption fees for dogs run \$65-\$90. Cats are \$50.



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