



Royal Animal Hospital – African Grey Parrot Care

There are 2 main sub-species of African Grey parrot - the Congo and the Timneh. Congo's are bigger and lighter with a red tail and dark beak. They are approximately 12-14 inches from beak to tail and on average weigh between 400-650 grams. The Timneh are smaller and darker with a maroon tail and a horn coloured upper beak. They measure 9-11 inches from beak to tail and on average weigh between 275-400 grams.



Both species have the potential to live for well over 50 years. The average is usually around 25-50, bear in mind that taking on one of these birds is a lifelong commitment which should not be taken lightly. Some say that the Timneh is less nervous than the Congo but generally both have the same characteristics. Due to their intelligence, African Greys are a very demanding pet.

You must be prepared to provide a lot of social as well as mental stimulation. It's said that a Grey has the intelligence of a 5 year old and the emotional needs of a 2 year old, therefore a Grey needs a great deal of time and patience which at times can be quite a challenge. Greys are a very nervous bird by nature and this shows when presented with new people or situations. They require continual socialization. Greys do have a reputation for being a 1 person bird, if enough time and effort is put in (by all family members) this is easily overcome to develop a successful family bird.

Start at a young age and get him used to change and new people. This will also help avoid the biting reputation which usually occurs due to a lack of socialisation. Do not feel the need to push yourself onto the bird, instead learn his body language and learn when to back off. Be relaxed and calm around him and speak to him gently, he will soon respond to you. African Greys have very powerful beaks and if displeased can give a very painful bite.

A healthy nutritious diet is essential to the happiness and well-being of your bird, especially an African Grey. Poor diet has been associated many problems including: hyperactivity, biting, feather plucking and continuous moulting. Calcium deficiency is usually the most common of problems. This is easily preventable by providing calcium and vitamin rich foods such as: Dark leafy greens (spinach, kale, cabbage and broccoli) Almonds and palm nuts are also an essential part of a Grey's diet as they contain beneficial fats. A quality and varied diet is a must for your Grey. Plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables must be offered daily, this must be coupled with a quality r pelleted diet.

Buying any cage is a matter of personal choice; added with the restrictions of space and money. The bigger the cage the better, as long as the bar spacing is no bigger than 1 inch. There are some considerations to take into account before buying your cage:

- Round cages are a complete no-no as it will lead to your bird suffering from psychological orientation problems.
- Make sure the cage has (mostly) horizontal bars as your Grey will enjoy climbing around his cage, vertical ones will restrict him from doing this.
- The size of the cage we would recommend for your Grey is 36x24x60 (92x61x153)
- If space is an issue get one with a play top for his out of cage time
- Put the cage in a lively room of the house for him to enjoy family life and interaction
- Keep the cage out of draughts and away from overly bright windows
- Add plenty of toys to his cage and move them around regularly to keep him interested and stimulated
- Provide a variety of perches dimensions and material:- rope and natural wood are very important to keep his feet healthy. You may consider a sandy or cement perch to keep nails trim. Varying thicknesses of the perches will help keep his feet exercised.



African Greys do make very loyal and affectionate companions. Once you have gained a Grey's trust he will love you for the rest of his life. They are excellent mimickers and can be excellent talkers, (some say the best in the world).

They can mimic astoundingly well from doorbells, phones and dogs barking to having over a 2000 word vocabulary. They also have the unique capability of putting words into context, African Greys are not for everyone, so if you are buying a baby from a breeder, be sure to find one raised in a like for like home situation. Greys are fantastic, treat them with respect and fulfil their needs. You will then soon be rewarded with a beautiful feathery family member for many years to come!