

ORIGIN
Australia

SIZE
35–36 cm

WEIGHT
270–350 g

LIFESPAN
40–70+ years

NOISE
Loud

TALKING
Moderate

Personality & behaviour

- Playful, acrobatic and sociable, with a strong sense of humour and a cockatoo's need for company. Less intensely clingy than an umbrella or Moluccan, but still a bird that suffers when left alone all day.
- Galahs can be nippy, and hand-reared birds often become hormonal and demanding at maturity. Limit petting to the head and neck only — stroking the back and under the wings drives sexual frustration, screaming and plucking. A raised crest with a stiff stance is a warning.
- Use positive reinforcement only — never hit, shout at or frighten a bird for biting or vocalising.

Housing & cage setup

- Minimum 120 × 90 × 150 cm, with an aviary or flight strongly preferred. Bar spacing 20–25 mm in heavy-gauge, bird-safe metal. Galahs chew — use secure latches.
- Natural branch perches (25–40 mm), replaced as destroyed, plus foraging toys and daily destructible wood. Foraging is the main tool for keeping a galah's weight down.

Time, company & noise

- 3–4 hours out of the cage daily with genuine flight or climbing exercise. Galahs are built to forage across open country for hours; a sedentary galah gains weight fast.
- Loud screeching, heaviest at dawn and dusk. Fine on a smallholding or a detached house with tolerant neighbours; difficult in a townhouse.
- Make the bird work for most of its food: foraging boxes, wrapped parcels, puzzle feeders, shreddable wood. This is weight management and enrichment in one.
- Provide 10–12 hours of quiet, uninterrupted darkness on a predictable schedule. Sleep-deprived parrots become irritable, scream more and are more likely to pluck.

What to feed

- A low-fat cockatoo or galah-specific pellet where available — galahs need a leaner formula than macaws or greys.
- A large daily volume of vegetables and leafy greens: this should be the bulk of the fresh food.
- Soaked or sprouted seed and cooked whole grains in measured portions.
- Very limited fruit — it is sugar.
- Very limited nuts. A galah does not get a daily nut ration the way a macaw does.
- A cuttlebone and clean fresh water daily.
- No sunflower seed as routine food, at all. Weigh your galah weekly: a bird creeping above its healthy weight is heading for lipomas and liver disease, and food is the first thing to adjust, then foraging, then flight. Ask your avian vet for this individual bird's target weight.

Do not feed

- Sunflower seed and other high-fat seed as routine food — galahs are exceptionally prone to fatty tumours.
- Avocado — every part of the plant, including guacamole.
- Chocolate and cocoa.
- Caffeine, alcohol and xylitol (sugar-free sweetener).
- Onion, garlic, chives and leeks.
- Fruit pips and stones: apple, pear, cherry, apricot, peach and plum.
- Raw or dried beans — all legumes must be thoroughly cooked.
- Rhubarb leaves.
- Salty, sugary, fried or processed human food.
- Dairy in more than a trace — birds cannot digest lactose.
- Mouldy or fermenting food, including fruit left in the bowl.
- Anything from your mouth, plate or fork — human saliva carries bacteria that kill birds.
- Grit. Parrots husk their own seed and grit can cause fatal impaction.
- Human medicines or supplements unless prescribed by an avian vet.

Health & what to watch

- Galahs are the most obesity- and lipoma-prone parrot commonly kept. Watch for fatty tumours (lipomas), atherosclerosis, fatty-liver disease, feather-destructive behaviour and PBFD, to which cockatoos are highly susceptible.
- **Before you buy:** Ask the seller for the hatch date, the closed ring number, a DNA sex certificate and any disease screening already done. A seller who cannot answer those questions, or who will not let you watch the bird eat, is a seller to walk away from. Ask what the bird is currently eating, so you can keep it stable for the first fortnight.
- **Your first month:** Book a wellness examination in the first week, not just when something looks wrong. Quarantine a new bird for 30–45 days away from any birds you already keep, ideally in separate air space. Recommended screening: psittacine beak and feather disease (PBFD), psittacosis (*Chlamydia psittaci*), polyomavirus and avian bornavirus.
- **Ongoing & human health:** Annual check-ups, moving to twice yearly for larger species over ten. Wing clipping is not routine care — discuss it first, because flight builds fitness, balance and confidence. Psittacosis passes to people as a flu-like illness or pneumonia: if you develop unexplained respiratory symptoms, tell your doctor you keep birds.

Urgent — see an avian vet today

- Difficulty or open-mouth breathing
- Pronounced tail bobbing at rest
- Fluffed, quiet and sitting on the cage floor
- Collapse or severe weakness
- Bleeding that does not stop, including a broken blood feather
- Seizures or loss of balance
- Repeated vomiting or regurgitation
- Not eating, or noticeable weight loss
- Straining, a swollen abdomen, or a hen unable to pass an egg
- Sudden major change in droppings
- Any contact with a cat or dog, even a minor scratch
- Suspected poisoning, fumes or trauma
- A soft lump on the chest or abdomen — possible lipoma
- Breathlessness after short flights

Who this species suits

- **First-time owners:** Not a first parrot. The lifespan, noise and weight management all need an experienced hand.
- **Experienced owners:** A wonderful companion for an owner with space, an aviary and the discipline to keep the bird lean.
- **Families & children:** Possible with older children in a detached home. The sticking points are noise and the fact that this bird may outlive the parents.

Before you decide

- I can weigh this bird weekly and keep it lean, including saying no to treats.
- I have aviary or flight space and tolerant neighbours.
- I can manage cockatoo feather dust in my home.
- I have named who takes this bird if it outlives me.
- If several answers are “No”, this is not the right bird for you — and walking away is a good outcome.

Recommended avian specialist

- **Bryanston Avian, Exotic & Small Animals Clinic**
- 99 Grosvenor Road, Bryanston, Johannesburg
- 011 706 1381 · WhatsApp 061 533 9950 · info@baesac.co.za
- Not every vet treats birds. Find your nearest avian-experienced practice before you need one.



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