

GOFFIN'S COCKATOO CARE GUIDE

Cacatua goffiniana · Know before you bring one home

ORIGIN

**Tanimbar
Islands,
Indonesia**

SIZE

30–32 cm

WEIGHT

250–350 g

LIFESPAN

30–40+ years

NOISE

Very loud

TALKING

Limited

Personality & behaviour

- Exceptionally clever, mechanically curious and endlessly busy. Affectionate and playful, with a cockatoo's need for company and a genius for finding what you did not want them to find.
- High risk of feather-destructive behaviour and repetitive stereotypies when bored or lonely. Limit petting to the head and neck; stroking the body creates a hormonally frustrated, screaming bird. Watch for escalating attention-screaming — reward quiet, never the noise.
- Use positive reinforcement only — never hit, shout at or frighten a bird for biting or vocalising.

Housing & cage setup

- Minimum 100 × 90 × 140 cm in heavy-gauge, bird-safe metal. Bar spacing 19–25 mm. Standard latches are not adequate — Goffin's open spring clips, slide bolts and screw-on feeders routinely. Use padlocks or locking carabiners on every door.
- Natural branch perches (25–35 mm), a constant supply of destructible wood, and complex mechanical puzzle toys. Rotate and rebuild the layout regularly; a Goffin's that has solved everything starts on the cage itself.

Time, company & noise

- 4+ hours out of the cage daily with active, supervised problem-solving. Under-stimulation in this species leads quickly to screaming, feather destruction and repetitive pacing.
- Very loud and piercing for a bird of this size, particularly when left alone or when the family is home but ignoring them. Not suited to flats or shared walls.
- This is the species where enrichment genuinely has to be engineering: multi-step foraging puzzles, boxes within boxes, locks to undo, and new problems every week.
- 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 complete cockatoo pellet of low to moderate fat as the foundation.
- A large daily volume of vegetables and leafy greens.
- Sprouted seed, cooked legumes and whole grains in measured portions.
- Limited fruit, and nuts only as training rewards — Goffin's gain weight easily.
- A cuttlebone and clean fresh water daily.
- Serve as much of the daily ration as possible inside foraging puzzles rather than in a bowl. For this species it is the most effective single intervention against both obesity and feather plucking.

Do not feed

- Sunflower-based seed mixes as a staple.
- Avocado — every part of the plant, including guacamole.
- Chocolate and cocoa.
- Caffeine, alcohol and xylitol (sugar-free sweetener).
- Onion, garlic, chives and leeks.
- Fruit pits 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

- Watch for feather-destructive behaviour, obesity, PBFD, respiratory irritation from their own powder down, and stress-driven stereotypic behaviour.
- **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
- New feather chewing or a bare patch appearing over days

Who this species suits

- **First-time owners:** No. Goffin's need an owner who can out-think them and stay ahead of the boredom.
- **Experienced owners:** Excellent for an experienced owner who genuinely enjoys building enrichment.
- **Families & children:** Difficult. The noise and the escapes are hard on a family home, and a bored Goffin's is destructive rather than gentle.

Before you decide

- Every cage door in my home will have a padlock or locking carabiner.
- I will build new foraging puzzles every week for thirty years.
- My home and neighbours can absorb a very loud small cockatoo.
- I can manage cockatoo feather dust.
- 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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