

GREEN-CHEEK CONURE CARE GUIDE

Pyrrhura molinae · Know before you bring one home

ORIGIN
South America

SIZE
25–26 cm

WEIGHT
60–80 g

LIFESPAN
15–30 years

NOISE
Moderate

TALKING
Limited, raspy

Personality & behaviour

- Affectionate, curious, energetic and mischievous. Green-cheeks love to burrow into clothing and under blankets, and will happily hang upside down from anything. Consistent positive-reinforcement training makes the difference between a nippy bird and a delightful one.
- Nipping is the number-one owner complaint and is almost always learned: hands used as toys, beak-wrestling games, and dramatic reactions all reinforce it. Redirect onto a toy, reward gentle beak pressure, and never play rough with the beak. Tail-fanning with a stiff, forward posture is a warning.
- Use positive reinforcement only — never hit, shout at or frighten a bird for biting or vocalising.

Housing & cage setup

- Minimum 80 × 60 × 80 cm, larger preferred. Bar spacing 12–16 mm. Horizontal bars on at least two sides — green-cheeks are enthusiastic climbers.
- Natural branch perches (12–20 mm), plenty of shreddable toys, a snuggle-safe hut only if it is a solid, fabric-free design, and a bathing dish. Avoid loose-thread rope toys and fabric huts with fraying edges: toes and tongues get caught.

Time, company & noise

- 2–4 hours out of the cage daily, plus company in the room. Green-cheeks bond closely and want to be involved in whatever you are doing.
- Moderate — far quieter than sun or jenday conures, with chattering and occasional short shrieks rather than sustained screaming. One of the few mid-size parrots realistically suited to a flat.
- Foraging toys, shreddable palm and paper, puzzle feeders and trick training. Green-cheeks learn quickly and enjoy showing off.
- 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. Burrowing hazard: green-cheeks hide under blankets, cushions and clothing. Birds are crushed, sat on and overheated this way every year. Know exactly where your bird is before you sit or lie down, and never let it sleep loose in bedding.

What to feed

- A small-parrot complete pellet as the foundation, converted gradually.
- Fresh vegetables and leafy greens daily: kale, broccoli, carrot, butternut, peas, peppers.
- Small portions of fruit — green-cheeks are enthusiastic fruit eaters, so keep it measured.
- Cooked legumes and whole grains in small amounts.
- Seeds and small nut pieces strictly as training rewards.
- A cuttlebone and clean fresh water daily.
- Green-cheeks will pick out fruit and seed and leave the rest. Chop everything finely and mix it so the bird cannot sort, and serve the pellet portion first thing in the morning when appetite is highest.

Do not feed

- 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

- Watch for nutritional deficiency, obesity, feather picking, proventricular dilatation disease and, rarely, conure bleeding syndrome. Hens can develop chronic egg-laying.
- **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
- Being trodden on, sat on or caught in bedding — always check for internal injury

Who this species suits

- **First-time owners:** Yes, with guidance — one of the best mid-size first parrots, provided the new owner learns to handle the nipping phase without punishment.
- **Experienced owners:** A charming, low-drama companion that fits easily alongside other commitments.
- **Families & children:** Good for families with children roughly eight and up, supervised. Everyone in the home needs to follow the same no-beak-games rule, or the nipping never resolves.

Before you decide

- Everyone in my home will avoid beak-wrestling and hand-as-toy games.
- I will always check cushions, blankets and chairs before sitting down.
- I can give 2–4 hours of out-of-cage time daily.
- I accept a commitment of fifteen to thirty years.
- 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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