INDIAN RINGNECK CARE GUIDE

Psittacula krameri · Know before you bring one home

ORIGIN	SIZE	WEIGHT	LIFESPAN	NOISE	TALKING
Africa & South Asia	**38–42 cm incl. tail**	**110–140 g**	**25–35+ years**	**Moderate–high**	**Excellent**

Personality & behaviour

- Bright, active and self-possessed. Ringnecks are excellent talkers with clear voices, but they are less naturally cuddly than a conure or cockatiel and often prefer proximity to handling. Respect that and they stay tame for life.
- The bluffing stage is the single most important thing to know. Between roughly four and twelve months, ringnecks go through a phase of lunging, nipping and apparent hostility. It is developmental, not malice, and it passes. Owners who punish it, or who stop handling the bird until it "calms down", end up with an untame bird for life. Keep handling gentle, brief, consistent and positive right through it.
- Use positive reinforcement only — never hit, shout at or frighten a bird for biting or vocalising.

Housing & cage setup

- Minimum 90 × 75 × 120 cm, with genuine room for a 20 cm tail — ragged, broken tail feathers are the classic sign of an undersized ringneck cage. Bar spacing 15–20 mm.
- Natural branch perches (15–25 mm) positioned so the tail hangs clear of bars and food bowls. Add shreddable toys, foraging puzzles, a bathing dish and destructible wood.

Time, company & noise

- 3–4 hours out of the cage daily plus flight. Ringnecks are strong, fast fliers and need real space to use it.
- A piercing, repeated contact call, heaviest at dawn and dusk, that carries a long way outdoors. Manageable in a detached house; difficult through a shared wall.
- Foraging puzzles, destructible wood, target and recall training. Ringnecks are quick learners and get into trouble when under-occupied.
- 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 pellet as the foundation — ringnecks are granivores and often resist conversion, so go slowly.
- Fresh vegetables and leafy greens daily: kale, broccoli, carrot, butternut, peas, peppers, dandelion.
- Cooked legumes, lentils and whole grains — ringnecks take to these well.
- Small portions of fruit and soaked or sprouted seed.
- Seeds and nuts only as training rewards.
- A cuttlebone and clean fresh water daily.
- Ringnecks are among the more stubborn species to move off seed. Offer new food in the morning, eat it in front of the bird, and never remove seed entirely until you can see the bird eating the replacement. Weigh weekly throughout the conversion.

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, SUITABILITY & COMMITMENT

Indian Ringneck · continued

Health & what to watch

- Watch for aspergillosis, PBFD, feather plucking, obesity and, in some birds, low blood calcium. Ringnecks hide illness particularly well.
- **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
- Any bird that escapes — ringnecks form invasive feral flocks; secure your home and never release a bird

Who this species suits

- **First-time owners:** Only with mentoring. A first-time owner who meets bluffing without support usually loses the bird's trust permanently.
- **Experienced owners:** Excellent — intelligent, striking and rewarding for someone who enjoys a more independent parrot.
- **Families & children:** Suited to households with older children, provided everyone is briefed on the bluffing stage and nobody reacts dramatically to a nip.

Before you decide

- I understand the bluffing stage and will keep handling gently through it.
- I have a cage long enough that the tail never touches the bars.
- My home can absorb a piercing dawn and dusk contact call.
- I can secure windows and doors — an escaped ringneck is both lost and an environmental problem.
- 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.

Read the full online guide
Scan for detailed care information and to support Wings of Kindness.