

SUN CONURE CARE GUIDE

Aratinga solstitialis · Know before you bring one home

ORIGIN

**North-east
South America**

SIZE

28–30 cm

WEIGHT

100–120 g

LIFESPAN

20–30+ years

NOISE

Extremely loud

TALKING

Limited

Personality & behaviour

- Affectionate, energetic, comedic and intensely social. Sun conures love physical contact and will bond closely, often to one person, becoming jealous of others if only one person handles them.
- Jenday or sun conure? The reliable field mark is the back: a sun conure's back and shoulders are golden-yellow with green only on the wings, while a jenday keeps a solidly green back, mantle and wings. Expect one-person bonding and jealous nipping unless every household member handles and trains the bird from the start. Pinned eyes, a fanned tail and a stiff forward lean come before a bite. Sun conures also chew persistently and need daily wood.
- Use positive reinforcement only — never hit, shout at or frighten a bird for biting or vocalising.

Housing & cage setup

- Minimum 90 × 75 × 110 cm, larger preferred. Bar spacing 15–20 mm, with horizontal bars for climbing.
- Natural branch perches (15–25 mm), shreddable toys, foraging puzzles, daily destructible wood and a bathing dish. Avoid fabric huts and loose-thread rope toys, which trap toes and tongues.

Time, company & noise

- 3–4 hours out of the cage daily with company. An ignored sun conure screams for attention, and it works, which makes it very hard to undo.
- This is the deciding factor. A sun conure's contact call is sharp, repetitive and clearly audible several houses away — physically uncomfortable indoors at close range. It is normal species behaviour and cannot be trained away. Unsuitable for flats, townhouses, shared walls or noise-restricted estates.
- Foraging toys, shreddable materials, puzzle feeders and trick training. Reward quiet deliberately; never answer a scream with attention of any kind.
- 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, converted gradually.
- Fresh vegetables and leafy greens daily, with orange and dark green vegetables for vitamin A.
- Small measured portions of fruit — sun conures will otherwise eat fruit and nothing else.
- Cooked legumes and whole grains.
- Seeds and nut pieces strictly as training rewards.
- A cuttlebone and clean fresh water daily.
- Chop and mix everything finely so the bird cannot sort out only the sweet items. Vitamin A deficiency is common in conures fed seed-heavy diets and shows up as recurring sinus and respiratory infections.

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 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 picking, obesity, proventricular dilatation disease, vitamin A deficiency and, rarely, conure bleeding syndrome.
- **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.

Who this species suits

- **First-time owners:** Easy to care for, so a reasonable first parrot on paper — but only in a home where the noise genuinely is not a problem.
- **Experienced owners:** A delightful, affectionate companion for an owner in a detached home.
- **Families & children:** Good for families in detached homes, children roughly eight and up. Everyone must handle the bird or it will choose one person and resent the rest.

Before you decide

- I have listened to a recording of a sun conure screaming and I can live with it.
- My home is detached, or my neighbours genuinely do not mind.
- Everyone in my household will handle and train this bird.
- I am buying a captive-bred bird with paperwork — wild sun conures are endangered.
- If several answers are “No”, this is not the right bird for you — and walking away is a good outcome.

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
- Recurrent sneezing, nasal discharge or swollen eyes — often vitamin A related

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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