General Budgerigar FAQs

Evaluation of a Pet Shop

Maybe you have already purchased a budgie and your pet shop experience was less than to be desired. Or maybe you are looking for the good pet shop to purchase your first budgie. Whatever the reason is here are some ways you can evaluate a pet shop and decide if this is where you would like to buy your 1st bird or your 10th.

People can say they love birds, but that does not necessarily mean that love translates into quality care based on knowledge, ethics, and/or common sense.

You don't have to buy on the first visit and you can visit other shops in the area and then come back to the one that feels right. What I have done and is a good idea since I tend to get emotionally involved is to keep money, credit cards, debit card and checks at HOME. This will avoid impulse buys.
A Comfortable Environment: Look around and observe. I personally enjoy going to a pet shop that makes me feel welcomed. I am one that likes to go to a pet shop just to look around, see what is new, and you start to gain a relationship with the workers there. Many people come just to enjoy looking at the pets because they enjoy observing and being around others who really care about birds. In fact the best way to learn about the employees at the pet shop is to listen to the advice they give those who are looking to purchase a bird. You can simply find out how knowledgeable and how much they care about giving good advice to a potential customer. We all have heard good advice and we all know what bad advice is especially if you have done your research in advance about the particular species you are looking to adopt.

Physical Aspects of Shop Environment: When you first walk into a pet shop what **do** you think immediately? You are using your sense of smell, vision, hearing and even touch.

- there should be no strong offensive order. If there is that is a sign that they are not cleaning up after their pets, keeping cages and perches clean etc... Cleaning is done as a part of the daily routine. No shop can be immaculate because birds are messy but a good shop will work on keeping the store in top condition at all times.
- is the lighting good or is dark and depressing
- is the temperature and humidity of the store just right
    - do you hear the pleasant sound of birds or do you here constant squawking (you may have just walked in and maybe this is happening just now) but if you visit frequently and the same bird (s) is continuously screaming this is an indicator.

Cage Environments:

- do the cages, water bowls and food dishes look clean (they should be cleaned once a day)
- no stalagmite dropping on the cages or perches (means no hard feces accumulated and hanging down)
- cage proper size for the type of bird and number of birds in the cage, meaning can each bird move around comfortably, are the smaller birds that like to fly back and forth in wider cages vs taller cages so they can jump or fly from perch to perch? Cages should not be stacked and stacked on top of each other. Are the cages at an appropriate level for the bird? Meaning not on the ground and at people's feet and not so high where you can't see the bird? Chest level or eye level is appropriate.
    - Do the cages have toys and fun items for the birds to play with and entertain themselves ?

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Parrot Care and Condition: Remember observe everything including the birds. The birds should look healthy. Click here to read qualities of a Signs of a sick budgie click here to read about Signs of a healthy budgie The birds should have good quality feathers, active, responsive etc... Every bird should have an opportunity to have toys to play with, some shops even have play gyms for their babies. Ask if the birds are handed daily to keep them tame and socialized.

Many pet shops just feed their birds seed diets. Don't be afraid to ask what they feed their birds. If you can find a shop that feed their birds a nutritious, varied diet of pellets, mashes, greens, vegetables, some fruit, and some seed. If a store still has parrots on a seed-only diet, they are in the "dark ages" and do not deserve your business.. A pellet-only diet (especially one with artificial food coloring) can be just as detrimental.

Ask who they use as their avian veterinarian for their birds health concerns. A quality parrot shop has a positive relationship with a qualified avian veterinarian in their area and they should be willing to share this information. If you purchase a bird you will need a qualified Avian vet too.

Unweaned Babies: Customers should not have direct access to young babies. If you are lucky to find a pet shop that lets you with supervision see their babies or handle the baby before you purchase observe their requirements. They should ask you to wash your hands first and then handle only with employee supervision only. I remember being at a pet shop where one of the customer just picked up one of the birds and flicked it's beak because it was biting her. The employee did nothing to stop this because they didn't want to lose the sale. That was very disheartening too experience. If any shop is willing to sell you unweaned babies walk out. In the long run, this can cause serious health problems for the bird. The seller and the buyer should never be willing to compromise the health of the baby. A good shop will feed their babies abundantly and then will gradually wean them to a nutritional diet. They do not do force weaning from the hand or the parent.

The Employees: The shop owner, management, employees should all have a genuine interest to ensure their birds to go excellent homes. It is a wonderful feeling when they start asking you questions about your family, home environment, other pets etc..this means they care about their babies. It doesn't mean they want to reject you as an owner they are looking out for the best interest of their babies. A good shop will refuse to sell a bird to someone they feel will not provide quality care for the bird.

Is there senior staff members in attendance and or including pet shop owner or is the shop manned by extremely young staff with no obvious qualifications and no team leaders to take direction from ?

Knowledgeable Employees: Ask yourself these questions

- Do they take the time to answer my questions rather then push you to purchase
- are they willing to answer the questions you ask like what do you feed the birds, when are they weaned, do you breed your own birds, are they purchased from another breeder, what size cage do I need, what type of perches etc... I love to ask these questions because if they say the minimum cage requirement or just dowel perches that would make me walk. A knowledgeable employee would ask you questions back about what you are looking for in a bird etc..
- do they handle the birds correctly and know about the different species
- what do they recommend for your bird, the minimum or more?
- Do they react immediately and favourably if you were to point out an obviously sick bird/animal in their store ? Or do they just leave it and don't seem to care ?
- Do they know about harmful bird toxin's in the home such as Tephlon etc..

Although I would not expect everyone who works in the store to know all about parrot nutrition etc.., there should be someone there who has taken the time to educate themselves about quality food products and be knowledgeable in other aspects. They should work as a team. If they don't know the answer they should be willing to find out the answer not just make up an answer for the sale.

Providing References: Bird shop personnel are willing to recommend avian veterinarians, knowledgeable behavioral consultants, publications, and other information sources. They also provide a source for the purchase of quality publications. I recently picked up a publication from a local chain shop and couldn't believe some of the information in there. The information was the bare minimum of what you should do for a bird.

Products: Do they have a wide selection of safe, colorful, quality bird toys of different sizes and shapes. Do they have different types of cages, perches, quality food such as pellets, cooking mixes, seed mixes etc.. Make sure they don't push you toward one diet or brand but give you information about variety. How about species related books to purchase to learn more that are up to date?

Customer Loyalty

: People go back to where they know they will feel comfortable knowing they are going to be purchasing a healthy bird from a store that is knowledgable about their birds and really cares. In my search and visiting different pet shops the good quality shops will charge more for their birds but in the long run you truly get what you pay for. I would pay more for a happy, abundantly weaned, well socialized baby bird that has a good quality source because the money is well worth it in the future for not only you but your newest addition.

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