

*Depending on classification, there are approximately 27 species of Amazon parrots (some with subspecies). Their native habitat ranges from South America to Northern Mexico. Nine species of Amazons are from islands in the Caribbean. Deforestation of their natural habitat and capture for the pet trade have greatly reduced the numbers of these once common species. Most free-ranging species are considered threatened or endangered. Efforts to protect these birds have resulted in a ban on importation for pet purposes in the United States and Europe through CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species). High quality companion birds are available from reputable breeders, rescue organizations and avian sanctuaries. Amazons have extroverted personalities and entertaining antics with profound talking abilities, but these birds don't always enjoy being touched or "cuddled." Some may be considered hyperactive or short-tempered. They are not recommended for first time bird owners and generally do not like to be around children.*

### Common Disorders of Amazon Parrots

- Malnutrition
- Behavioral issues (screaming, aggression/biting)
- Obesity
- Feather destructive behavior
- Vitamin A deficiency, resulting in discolored feathers, sores and/or redness on the bottom of the feet, blunted choanal papillae, sinusitis
- Respiratory disease (sneezing, discharge from nares, labored breathing, swollen eyes)
- Cardiovascular disease (enlarged heart, atherosclerosis)
- Liver disease
- Amazon foot necrosis
- Tumors (lipomas, papillomas)
- Reproductive disorders (egg binding, cloacal protrusion)

Many of the common disease conditions in Amazon parrots are often the result of malnutrition. Visiting your avian veterinarian for routine health checks, along with nutritional and husbandry counseling, will help prevent many of the above diseases and support you in having a long, satisfying relationship with your Amazon parrot. For help in finding an avian veterinarian in your area, contact the Association of Avian Veterinarians (AAV) by visiting [www.AAV.org](http://www.AAV.org) and click on "Find a Vet."

©2015 Association of Avian Veterinarians  
720-458-4111 [www.aav.org](http://www.aav.org)

# AMAZONS



Companion Bird Care  
**SERIES**

## What to Expect from Your Amazon Parrot



Amazon parrots are known for their strong personalities, high intelligence and excellent ability to mimic. Double yellow-headed, yellow-naped and blue-fronted Amazons seem to have the most potential for talking,

### Vital Statistics

Adult body length: 10-18 inches (25-46 cm)

Adult body weight: 200-700 g

Age of sexual maturity: 4-6 years

Maximum life span: 80 years

ing, laughing, whistling, coughing or even imitating a baby's cry. The ability to "talk" or imitate sounds is an individual characteristic even within a certain species. This ability seems to be developed best at an early age, probably before the bird is

2 years old. Males may be easier to teach than females. As with other parrots, Amazons tend to be the most vocal in the early morning and late afternoon. They may also express vocalization in a negative way by screaming. Although mealy, white-fronted and orange-winged Amazons are not as lively and talkative as other species, they are usually regarded as more gentle and affectionate. Hand-raised blue-fronted Amazons generally make good companions.

### What Do Amazons Do All Day?

Amazons are more sedentary than other birds, so some effort must be made to keep them active. An exceptionally large enclosure would encourage them to move around more as would foraging stations, complex puzzle toys and other methods of preventing boredom. Because Amazons love to chew, toys must be free of toxic metals, hooks, sharp objects or small, easily consumed components. Providing chew toys or fresh-cut branches from nontoxic, pesticide-free trees may prevent some Amazons from destroying their perches as quickly. Check with your veterinarian for recommendations on locally available, safe trees.

### What Should You Feed Your Amazon?

For a long, healthy life, Amazons should be fed a high quality, toxin-free formulated diet. Supplementation may include chopped organic vegetables and fruit and whole grains.

Amazons are prone to obesity; therefore, food items that are high in fat must be avoided.

### Are Amazons Tame?

Young, hand-fed Amazons adapt readily to new surroundings and handling procedures. They should be exposed early in life to novel situations (e.g., car travel, hospital visits, multiple visitors in the household) so they are well adjusted to these events. Adult Amazons tend to become bonded to certain individuals and exhibit territoriality and aggression toward others. They learn quickly to use lunging or biting to relay their negative opinions. Discipline, leadership, patience, a sense of ritual and the offering of rewards are necessary to modify the behavior of Amazons. Even then, they are not completely trustworthy and may bite for no apparent reason, especially after they reach sexual maturity.

### Is Your Amazon a Male or a Female?

In most Amazon species it is difficult to reliably distinguish a male from a female based on physical characteristics; therefore, laboratory methods using DNA technology may be used for sex determination. Amazons are somewhat of a challenge to breed but the offspring are easy to hand feed.

### Should Wing Feathers Be Clipped?

Amazons that are allowed unrestricted freedom in the home may encounter numerous physical dangers or toxins. Wing clipping is a personal decision made for each bird and decided between the client and veterinarian. The goal of clipping the wing feathers is not to make the bird incapable of flight, but to prevent it from developing rapid and sustained flight and to prevent escape. Additional trimming may be required 8-12 weeks after the start of a molt cycle.

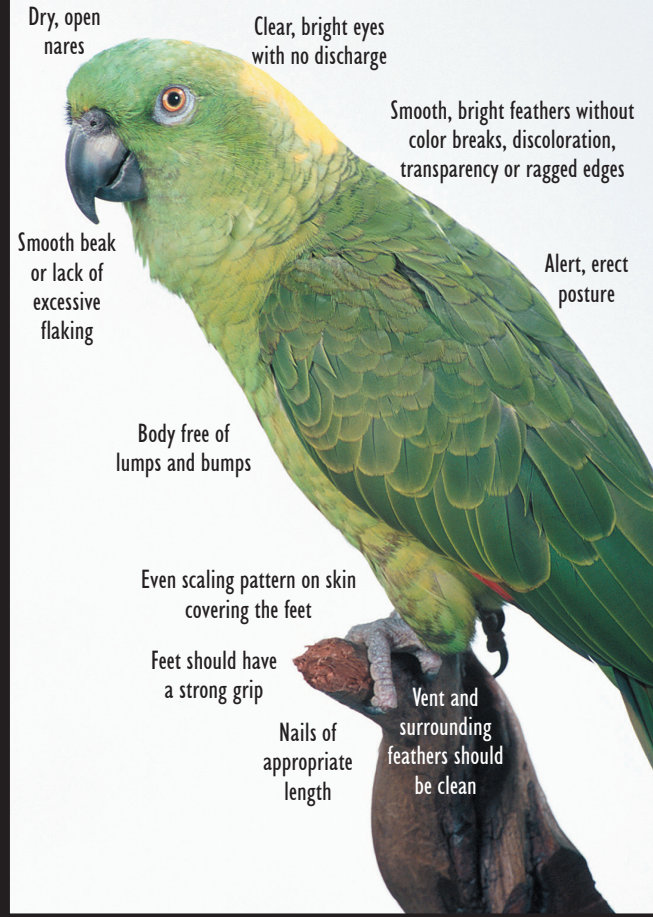
## How to Keep Your Amazon Parrot Healthy, Happy and Safe!

- ✓ Take your Amazon to your veterinarian after purchase, then once annually for examinations.
- ✓ Feed a fresh, high quality, toxin-free, formulated diet with daily supplementation of chopped vegetables and fruit and whole grains.
- ✓ Avoid feeding nuts, seeds, sweet items and salty foods, as these may contribute to unwanted behaviors and obesity.
- ✓ Provide clean, fresh uncontaminated water (try using water bottles) and replace twice daily.
- ✓ Offer toys, social interaction, and foraging and problem-solving opportunities.
- ✓ Provide occasional opportunity for bath, shower, or misting (at least weekly).
- ✓ Avoid spraying house with insecticides.

### Housing for your Amazon should:

- ✓ be as large as possible.
- ✓ be clean, secure and safe.
- ✓ be constructed of durable, nontoxic material (some cages may contain toxic metals).
- ✓ contain variable-sized perches made of clean, nontoxic, pesticide-free tree branches.
- ✓ avoid having perches located directly over food/water containers.
- ✓ offer occasional opportunity for protected outdoor exposure to fresh air, sunlight and exercise.

## What Your Veterinarian Looks for in a Healthy Amazon Parrot



Dry, open nares

Clear, bright eyes with no discharge

Smooth, bright feathers without color breaks, discoloration, transparency or ragged edges

Smooth beak or lack of excessive flaking

Alert, erect posture

Body free of lumps and bumps

Even scaling pattern on skin covering the feet

Feet should have a strong grip

Nails of appropriate length

Vent and surrounding feathers should be clean

Amazons are very curious and will investigate anything new in their environment. That is why it is important to prevent their access to:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| ✗ ceiling fans                                   | ✗ pesticides  |
| ✗ hot cooking oil                                | ✗ toxic fumes                                       |
| ✗ overheated nonstick-coated cookware            | ✗ easily dismantled toys                            |
| ✗ leg chains                                     | ✗ dogs, cats and young children                     |
| ✗ sandpaper-covered perches                      | ✗ cedar, redwood and pressure-treated wood shavings |
| ✗ tobacco and cigarette smoke                    | ✗ sources of lead or zinc                           |
| ✗ chocolate, avocado, salt, alcohol and caffeine | ✗ plug-in air fresheners                            |
| ✗ toxic houseplants                              | ✗ heavily-scented candles                           |