Introducing A Second Bird Into Your Home

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As experienced pet bird owners can attest, once you enter the enchanting world of bird keeping, acquiring more birds is the logical next step. But before you add a second bird to your "flock," make sure you consider the health of your primary bird, both physically and mentally.

Protect Against Disease

Never introduce a new bird into your home without a proper quarantine period. Many avian veterinarians suggest a quarantine of between thirty and ninety days, because some illnesses may not show any symptoms within a 30 day period. So it's always better to be safe than sorry.

To quarantine your new bird, keep her as far from your other bird as possible, preferably in a different building with a different ventilation system, but at a minimum in a separate bedroom with the door closed. An easy and economical way to keep your bird comfortable and contained during a quarantine is to use a separate Economy Cage as a quarantine cage.

During the quarantine period, be absolutely meticulous about sanitation. Thoroughly wash after caring for, touching, or playing with either bird. Don't swap dishes, toys, perches, and other equipment. Clean both cages daily, starting with the existing bird's cage first. Being stringent about cleanliness greatly reduces the chance of passing along any hidden illness to your existing bird.

Once the quarantine period is over, take your new bird to an avian veterinarian for a complete health exam. You may want to have your bird's flight feathers clipped at this time also. Once your new bird is given a clean bill of health, you can begin introducing him to your existing pet.

Make Introductions Smooth and Stress-free

While all birds have distinct personalities, usually birds tend to get along well with members of their same species. For example, smaller birds such as finches and "budgies" generally assimilate well. Larger birds like parrots may require more effort on your part to successfully integrate into a harmonious "flock."

Adding a new bird to your flock is not without its challenges and does require a substantial amount of work. If you are unsure whether or not bringing home a

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new bird is the right thing for your flock, research the topic by consulting an avian behaviorist, veterinarian, or breeder.

Five Steps to a SMOOTH Introduction

1. **House both birds in their own cages** in the same room. This allows them to get to know each other from within their own comfortable territory.

2. **Attend to each bird separately.** Provide separate play sessions for each bird.

3. **Treat your existing bird as the "alpha" bird.** This will help him remain confident in his place in your flock and help combat jealousy. Greet him first, feed him first, and attend to him first. But be sure to give each bird equal amounts of your time, while reassuring your existing bird that he has not lost his place in the flock, or in your heart.

4. **Eventually allow the birds to exercise** outside their cage at the same time. A new playstand Is great for this purpose, as it provides a "neutral" space for them to socialize and play together.

5. **Watch closely** for signs of jealousy or incompatibility. Closely monitor both birds and be alert for pulling feathers, biting, screaming, lunging, and other signs of aggression. If these behaviors occur, separate the birds immediately. Self-mutilation is another sign that your bird may be struggling with jealousy or territorial issues.

Adding a new bird to your flock is a wonderful way to reduce loneliness and promote natural social behavior. But it is not without its challenges.

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