

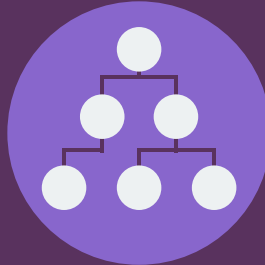
Hand Rearing 101

Getting Started



Age

The baby's age makes a significant difference to the approach you need to take. Neonates (newly hatched from the egg) require more regular feeds of much smaller volume and temperature is also absolutely critical. A small mistake that you may get away with in an older baby, is very likely to kill a neonate. So if you are not confident, experienced and well supplied with the essentials for neonatal hand rearing – don't go there. Start with an older baby and get the basics right first.



Species

The species of bird you choose is very important. All baby birds require care, but certain species are much harder to hand raise. Do as much research as possible on the bird that interests you before making the decision to take on the job. Think about the time involved, the duration of the raising process and what you will need to give up in this period of time. If you have any doubts, take a few steps back and ask the same questions again with an easier species of bird.



Food

The fuel for life, from vitamins to amino acids, everything your baby needs to develop essential organs, tissues, bones and feathers must be included in their formula. DO NOT skimp on the food for your baby, this is such an important stage of your baby's life so make sure you do your research. Be confident that whichever brand or formula you decide to use has been manufactured by a reputable company that uses quality ingredients, techniques and scientific research when developing their foods.



"Hand raising birds is fulfilling experience. However, it can end in heartbreak if things go wrong."



Smaller birds are generally better for beginners. They require plenty of care and attention, though they tend to wean faster and information on their needs tends to be easier to obtain.

Beginner

Medium to large species of birds tend to be more difficult, with longer periods between hatching and weaning. Many birds in this category have particular environmental requirements and can be more prone to problems during the hand raising process.

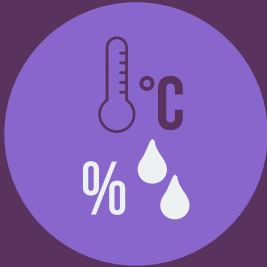
Intermediate

Without plenty of experience taking on the task of hand raising the likes of a macaw or similar should be avoided. These species can be very finicky, take great lengths of time to wean and require the steady hand of experience to be fair to the bird.

Expert



"When you have made the decision on your bird age and species, THEN it's time to get your equipment together and conduct in depth research."



Brooder

Correct humidity levels and temperatures are crucial for neonates. Without the ability to regulate their own body temperature and humidity in their environment, babies are dependent on the parent, in this case that means you! To achieve this, you must have a good quality brooder.

The correct brooder temperature is usually between 35-38°C, but does depend on the age and species of the baby in question. If temperature is below 30°C your baby will struggle to stay warm, digest food and grow. Below 20°C death is the most likely outcome.

High temperatures can be equally dangerous, causing dehydration, heat stress and the eventual death of your baby.

The other factor to consider in the brooder is humidity. A parrot's natural nest is very warm but is also very humid. If your brooder is hot and dry, your baby can quickly dehydrate. Ideally we want to replicate the natural environment, the ideal humidity for most species is between 70-80%. Vetafarm Psittabed has very good water retaining properties and goes a long way to ensure brooder substrates do not begin sucking moisture from the baby. Along with a thermostat, humidity control should be a standard feature of any quality brooder.



Scales

Recording the weight of the baby is invaluable in identifying how your baby is progressing. We highly recommend you invest in a decent set of scales. Babies should be weighed when the hand rearing process begins. It is normal for a baby to lose a small amount of weight in the first 24-48 hours as the bird adjusts to its new diet and surroundings.

From there, weighing your baby before the very first feed of the day when the crop is empty is the best way of getting an accurate read on how your baby is progressing. Record the weight daily and soon you will see a growth pattern emerge.

Weighing your baby daily is a great way of detecting a problem early and tending to it before it escalates into a life threatening issue.

If you notice your bird's weight gains are slow, stop or go backwards, you need to start looking for reasons why.



Feeding Equipment

With a variety of different feeding utensils available there is no right or wrong choice. There are only a few key things to keep in mind, easy, practical and safe.

Crop needles require some know how and experience to be used safely and correctly. Feeding syringes and spoons are easy to use, but quite messy and slow.

Vetafarm's own creation the Ezy Feeder offers the advantages of using a syringe with the simplicity of the spoon. The Ezy Feeder allows for accurate, low mess feeding and the ability to keep food warm for the duration of the feed. It's a great compromise for those that don't have the technical expertise required to handle a crop needle.

Hygiene is also very important, be sure to clean all equipment between feeds and always discard any leftover formula.



Ezy Feeder

The most convenient way to feed baby birds. The Vetafarm Ezy Feeder eliminates mess, speeds up feeding and allows you to monitor feed intake. It comes with a lifetime guarantee, and it fits all luer tapered syringes.



Feeding Spoon

Conveniently shaped spoon eliminates mess and speeds up hand feeding. Designed to suit the shape of the beak. Also comes with a lifetime guarantee.



Nutricore

Provides exceptional nutritional balance, supporting optimal growth, feather development and immune function for baby birds. A non-extruded blend allows for the easiest mixing, designed to be used from hatching to weaning. Not recommended for sensitive species such as African Greys, Black Cockatoo's and Macaws.



Neocare

Ideal to use from day one, Neocare is scientifically formulated for optimal health and growth in your chicks, containing all the necessary vitamins, minerals and amino acids for growing bones, organ functions and strong feather development.