



The United Bird Societies of South Australia Inc.

The South Australian affiliate of The Avicultural Federation of Australia Inc.

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Patron: His Excellency, Sir Eric Neal AC CVO, Governor of South Australia.

Fact Sheet No. 5: BUILDING AN AVIARY

Basic requirements of an aviary - To provide shelter for the birds from heat, cold, draughts and rain and to prevent pests like mice, rats, cats and snakes etc. from entering the aviary to eat the seed or disturb the birds.

Aviary type and size - For parrots, length in an aviary is more important than width as parrots like to fly for exercise. Some finches like Zebras and Java Sparrows do well in this style of aviary. For finches, width is just as important as length because finches will search the whole aviary floor for food, nesting material and nest sites. Width makes a aviary more suitable to grow shrubs and other plants for natural nest sites and food. For small parrots eg. Neophemas and Lovebirds a 3 metre long by 0.9 metre wide aviary can be used. For medium parrots eg. Grass Parrots and Rosellas an aviary 4 metres long by 1.2 metres wide can be used. For large parrots and cockatoos eg. King Parrots and Major Mitchell's an aviary 5 to 8 metres long by 1.2 to 2.4 metres wide is suitable. For six pairs of compatible finches an aviary 4 to 6 metres long by 1.8 to 2.4 metres wide would be suitable for planting shrubs etc. for nest sites.

Aviary site - Depending on local weather conditions an aviary should face somewhere between north and east to provide the best protection from the effects of weather and to get the morning sun, but the size and shape of a yard may mean an aviary may have to face a different way so more shelter may be needed for a successful aviary. The site selected should be level and well drained and have no branches of trees overhanging and some thought given to room for expansion in the future.

Aviary height - A minimum height of between 1.8 to a maximum of 2.4 metres is suitable for most types of birds with 2.1 metres being a compromise of letting birds fly over your head while in the aviary and stopping the weather beating into the aviary unless well sheltered.

Shelter - As a general rule 1/3 to 1/2 of the rear of the aviary should be covered in to protect the birds from the weather. Insulation can be placed under the roof to reduce summer heat. The front of the shelter may be fully open or partly closed in with fibreglass or a similar material for added protection and privacy for the birds.

Flight - The flight can be fully open or have part or all of the roof closed over with iron or fibreglass etc. to provide extra protection. Metal kick plates 300 to 600 millimetres wide are usually fitted to the bottom of the aviary to protect the birds while on the ground feeding etc. and to help prevent mice etc. from getting in.

Aviary materials - For the framework, either metal tubing (plain or galvanised - round or square) or timber can be used. Timber can be chewed by some parrots and, like plain tubing, it needs to be painted. Tubing can be welded, bolted or have plastic joiners to put it together and may be made in panel form for easy transport or made on the site. For wall and roof cladding, iron or asbestos free cement sheeting can be used. Iron sheeting is recommended for most aviaries and can be obtained in galvanised or colourbond finish in many shape and sizes.

Wire netting - Netting is available in different sizes, width, thickness and shape. The most common size of wire is 13 millimetre which keeps out large mice etc. but not small ones. 9 millimetre wire is sometimes available but even that will not keep out small mice and is more expensive than 13 millimetre wire. Wire thickness for small parrots and finches can be 0.8 millimetre. For Lovebirds and medium parrots 1.2 millimetre wire should be used and for large parrots and those that chew wire 1.2 to 1.6 millimetre wire should be used.

Doors and safety flights - For doors a recommended height is 1.5 metres and a width of 450 millimetres to allow easy access without having to bend too much to enter. The door can be placed in the front, side or rear of the aviary. When doors are in the front or side the birds can see you approaching, but when in the back birds may become frightened when you open the door. If a safety flight is built, birds cannot escape when you enter and if built at the rear of the aviary it is possible to do all the feeding and watering without having to enter the aviary. If built at the front it gives extra protection and privacy to the birds.

