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Alex graduated from the University of Sydney in 1991.

He achieved Membership of the Avian Health Chapter of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists in 1996. In November 1996 he opened the first and only Sydney all bird and exotic pet practice. The Clinic moved to 1 Hunter St, Waterloo in 2003 and sees approximately 80% birds, and 20% fish, reptiles and other exotic pets. Alex is the current President of the Australian Veterinary Association Avian Group.

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are often too draughty and bedrooms too quiet. If you have a well-socialised parrot, they are best in the living room. However if you stay up

late, the birds must be covered soon after sunset. If you like to play loud music or watch television after 8pm, it is best to move your bird to a different room at sleep time. The room they spend most of their time in should be sunny, but preferably not right under a window. Near a window can be too hot in summer and too cold in winter. Birds too close to the window may become nervous if too many predators, such as cats or butcher birds, stare through the window at them at close range.

Your bird's secure home needs to be as big as possible. For birds that spend long periods in their cage, an absolute minimum cage width should allow two birds to fly past each other. If you have a larger bird which spends the majority of daylight hours outside its cage,

then its cage should have room for it to comfortably flap its wings. The highest perch should be at least around shoulder to eye height. The cage should be rectangular, not circular, with more length than height, as birds are not helicopters! For most birds, especially nervous ones, it is best to have one side of their home against a wall so they don't have to look behind for signs of danger. The bars should be thick enough to secure your bird from outside predators and to stop it chewing through the wire.

The bars should be the as far apart as possible without allowing the bird to push its head between them. Perches should be of varying thickness and consistency to keep the feet healthy. Since birds will spend periods of time in the day in

their cage, various foraging natural toys should be made available to keep them busy, and a selection of native plants and grass should be provided. Galahs love to chew grass on the ground, larger cockatoos such as corellas love to grasp wooden objects and remove food from them, while budgies and canaries like to eat fresh grass seeds lower down in the cage. By doing all this, rather than your bird feeling like that the cage is a place of imprisonment, it is likely to fly happily back to its house when requested by you.

— *Happy Housing for your indoor bird* —

When I tell people I meet that I am a bird vet they often reply that they "hate birds in cages". My answer to this is that I agree with them and that a bird should have a home, not a cage. This home is often surrounded by wire or bars to protect our birds from outside dangers. These dangers include other animals, and access to toxins such as lead paint or electrical wire.

This home should be a place of safety just as our own homes are for our dogs and cats. Our dogs, as with our birds, often spend a lot of time in their home but still come out for a walk, or in the case of birds for a fly, for a reasonable period of time at least once to twice a day. This is similar to many wild Australian parrots which fly in the morning and the afternoon and spend the heat of the day in one of a few safe spots in the trees.

Since the birds often spend time in this home they need to feel safe, clean and secure. The cage placement depends on the type of birds you keep, as each species of bird has different requirements. Most healthy Australian parrots

do not mind cool (but not cold) conditions. They don't like draughts, sudden changes of temperature or high heat. Many well-socialised parrots like to be where the action is, in the main living space, but some shy birds (for example some canaries or finches), or not well socialised birds, like to be in a safer, quieter part of the house such as a separate room. In general, kitchens are not ideal as they become very hot during cooking times and there may be the release of airborne toxins from some equipment, including non-stick pans. Hallways

