



Avian Care Charter

Name of the organisation:	Birdline UK Ltd.
Governing Body:	The Board of Directors of Birdline U.K. Ltd.
Registered Charity Numbers:	1125030 (England) & SC043288 (Scotland)
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1.0 Mission Statement

Birdline's mission is to educate people in the best practices of bird care & husbandry, and to provide a refuge to every orphaned, unwanted, found or injured parrot which the charity has the means to care for.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Birdline supports the view that all companion and aviary birds should have the right to enjoy five basic freedoms:

- Freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition.
- Freedom from physical discomfort and pain.
- Freedom from injury or disease.
- Freedom from fear and distress.
- Freedom to express their natural behavioural needs.*

2.2 Birdline have set out in this Charter the minimum standards of care which every companion and aviary parrot needs and deserves in order to attain the aforementioned freedoms. This Charter is a guideline for Birdline's volunteer rehoming team and for keepers and prospective keepers. It is not a fully comprehensive document intended to cover every aspect of avian welfare and focuses only on those areas that Birdline considers to be the minimum standard of care.

3.0 Breeding and trade

3.1 Birdline supports the Convention on International Trade – Endangered Species (CITES) and its opposition to the importation of animals from the wild and to the importation of products derived from wild animals. Birdline accepts, however, that importation of live specimens may be necessary for captive breeding programmes for endangered species.

3.2 *Birdline is cognoscente that life in a domestic setting can in no way be comparable to the life of a parrot in its natural environment. In addition, Birdline recognises that human imprinting has, in many cases, changed the specific needs and requirement of birds - often causing behavioural problems in companion parrots, which are atypical in their wild counterparts. Birdline is also aware of the all too many cases of birds being moved from home to home and abused because humans find it difficult to live with behaviours which they consider to be antisocial. It is for all these reasons that, despite raising young being a natural behaviour, Birdline is against the breeding of parrots in the U.K for the domestic market. Instead, Birdline encourages the fostering of existing birds.

4.0 Duty of care

- 4.1 Caring for a Birdline bird is a privilege, not a right. The bird's needs and welfare comes first at all times. Keepers must agree to inform Birdline if they can no longer meet the birds needs (due to change in circumstances, health etc.) and to work with Birdline to find a more suitable home if need be.
- 4.2 It is the duty of each keeper to research best practises in bird care and provided that for their bird.
- 4.3 Birdline has a duty to undertake home inspections, in order to ensure standards of care are being upheld.
- 4.4 Keepers must understand that failing to provide the minimum standards of care, may result in the bird being removed and rehomed.
- 4.5 Birdline is committed to ending the practise of breeding and housing parrots in environments alien to their origins. Therefore, Birdline birds must not be allowed to breed, and any eggs laid by bonded pairs should be replaced with dummy eggs.

5.0 Respect

- 5.1 Keepers must remember that birds are intelligent, sentient creatures and to treat them with kindness and respect at all times.
- 5.2 Keepers must learn about, understand and respect natural behaviours, including flock calling and other vocalisations, foraging and preening instincts and the need to nest or fly.
- 5.3. Keepers must encourage safe flight and not clip birds wings unless for medical, physiological or extreme behavioural reasons. The need for wing clipping must be approved by a Birdline representative and undertaken by said representative or an avian vet.
- 5.4 Birds should be protected from aggressive human behaviour, whether it be directed at them or at others within their proximity.
- 5.6 Birds should be protected from direct physical and mental harm.
- 5.7 Birds should be protected from environments where foul language is used, as repetition and vocalisation of profanities is a reason that many birds are difficult to rehome.

6.0 Housing

- 6.0 Bird cages / aviaries should be suitable for the species - I.e. correct bar spacing and size.
- 6.1 Bird cages / aviaries should be as large as possible. As an absolute minimum the cage should allow the bird to stretch their wings fully and completely turn around, without abrading tail feathers.
- 6.2 Bird cages / aviaries must be well maintained, free of galvanised metal and rust.

- 6.3 Bird cages, aviaries, carriers, perches, and playstands must be cleaned regularly.
- 6.4 Water and food bowls to be cleaned at least daily to ensure removal of biofilm.
- 6.5 Travel carriers should be of a suitable size and contain perches and access to food and water. They should be clean, secure and made of a suitable material.

7.0 Light and Sleep for companion parrots

- 7.1 Companion birds should receive 10-12 hours sleep per night, unless advised otherwise by an avian vet.
- 7.2 Consistency of sleep routine should be maintained - i.e. wake up and bedtime should be within +/- 1 hour every day.
- 7.3 Sleep routine should maximise natural / daylight hours as far as possible within a domestic setting. E.g. birds uncovered and in daylight from no later than 9.30 am.
- 7.4 Where available, UV light bulbs should be used in accordance with manufacturers' guidance.

8.0 Diet

- 8.1 Keepers' should be aware of toxic food and drinks and ensure parrots are not allowed access to these.
- 8.2 Water should be changed at least twice per day - morning and evening.
- 8.3 A variety of fresh food should be given every day (unless advised otherwise by an avian vet), when the birds wake up and removed before bed.
- 8.4 Dried food may remain in the cage / aviary longer.
- 8.5 Where used, good quality seed with low / no sunflower seed and no shelled or unshelled monkey or peanuts should be provided.
- 8.6 Where used, good quality pellets should be provided, preferably without food colourings.

9.0 Enrichment

- 9.1 Companion birds should receive at least 3 hours out of the cage and interacting with other birds and / or humans (dependent on the birds' preferences) every day. If the cage size is inadequate for daily use, i.e. for sleeping only, then this time must be extended.

- 9.2 Birds must have regular access to daylight / sunshine and fresh air for health and enrichment purposes.
- 9.3 The keeper must have the ability to safely open windows and / or to take birds outside in harnesses, travel carriers or aviaries.
- 9.4 Birds should be provided with a variety of perches of different sizes and textures.
- 9.5 Birds should be given enrichment, such as preening, chewing and foraging toys.

10.0 Safety

- 10.1 Safeguards must be put in place to stop birds escaping from doors, windows, aviaries and other exit points.
- 10.2 Harnesses should be inspected before every use to ensure they are in good condition and safe to use.
- 10.3 Safeguards should be put in place to stop birds crashing into windows and mirrors etc.
- 10.4 Other mammals (whether domestic or vermin) such as cats, dogs, rats, should not be allowed in contact with birds at any time. Under no circumstances should they be left with unsupervised access to the birds.
- 10.5 At no times should large birds have access to small birds - as birds can be injured and killed even through the cage bars.
- 10.6 Toxic fumes should not come in contact with the birds, and keepers must be aware of the hazards of Teflon (non stick) and various household chemicals and equipment.
- 10.7 Where toxic fumes are produced in close proximity to birds, such as ammonia from other animals' urine, this must be cleaned / removed immediately, in order to prevent damage to birds respiratory systems and general health.
- 10.8 Birds should live within smoke free areas in the home and smokers should at the very least wash hands before handling birds.
- 10.9 People smoking cigarettes or vaping etc. should be prevented from being in close proximity to birds, including when outside and whilst transporting birds.
- 10.10. Keepers should have an evacuation plan in case of emergency.

11.0 Health and Emergency care

- 11.1 Keepers must be familiar with their nearest avian veterinary practice and agree to provide access whenever necessary.
- 11.2 Keepers must agree to administer medication where necessary, as per veterinary instructions.

- 11.3 Keepers should maintain a basic parrot first aid kit within the home.
- 11.4 Health Insurance policies must be acquired for each fostered bird, in order to ensure that medical care can be provided.

12.0 Review

- 12.1 Birdline undertakes to review and amend this Charter from time to time, in order to update and strengthen its provision in the light of changes in national and worldwide legislation, and in the developing understanding of avian behaviours and needs.

13.0 Contact Details

- 13.1 Any queries in relation to this Volunteer Policy may be directed to the Directors by email at directors@birdline.org.uk or by post to the registered address: Birdline U.K. Ltd., International House, 12 Constance Street, London, E16 2DQ