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We recommend the perches are made of natural tree branches. Fruit trees are preferred, and these should be washed thoroughly with an appropriate disinfectant before use. Natural tree branches prevent all the common foot injuries that we see, including pododermatitis, and prevent nail overgrowth. Sandpaper perch covers should not be used as they simply abrade the feet and do not keep the nails short.

Ultraviolet lighting is important for birds, being required both for natural behaviour and calcium metabolism. If kept indoors, specific bird lamps are available and have recognised health benefits. A good review of bird lighting can be found on the Arcadia website www.arcadia-bird.com/uv-lighting/. A bird lamp should be fitted above the cage to reflect light downwards as a bright light hitting the side of the bird can cause eye irritation. If kept outdoors, the birds should have an aviary where they can bathe in direct sunlight. Glass or plastic placed over the roof can absorb UV light, prevent the birds from accessing it.

Different toys should be added and changed regularly to entertain birds. When purchasing toys or cages always toxicosis is increasingly seen in captive birds. Be careful as some fixings can contain zinc, yet the toy is zinc free. Household items such as keys, old paintwork, and lead weights can contain heavy metals and be potential sources of toxicity. By researching the natural behaviour of hoopoes in the wild, you can make up your own forms of enrichment. This will keep them occupied and stimulated, preventing boredom and potentially harmful stereotypical behaviours from forming. An example of this is to provide natural foraging areas with soil boxes.

Free flight is an essential requirement and birds should be given the opportunity for regular exercise. If indoors, it is important to ensure that the room they are allowed to fly around is totally secure with all windows, doors and chimneys blocked off, heaters and fans turned off and any potentially poisonous house plants removed. If started young, birds can be trained to perch on a finger and returned to the cage. An outdoor aviary should provide ample room for the birds to achieve sustained flight.

The cage or aviary should be cleaned out at least once a week to help prevent disease. A suitable disinfectant, such as F10, should be used.

In the wild, these birds eat a wide variety of invertebrates, although they will occasionally take seeds and plant material as well as larger prey items such as frogs and reptiles. In captivity, many of the live prey items found in pet stores can be high in fat and not nutritionally balanced. No commercial pellet food is available for hoopoes.

Diet in captivity should include a variety of live foods, such as mealworms, waxworms and crickets. It is important to gut load the insects prior to feeding them to your bird. This can be achieved by providing root vegetables for them to eat, or ideally a commercial gut loader (e.g. Nutrogrub; Vetark). Live food can be dusted with a vitamin and mineral powder (e.g. Arkvits; Vetark) 2-3 times a week to help the diet remain balanced. Good quality seed mix, such as those marketed for canaries, can be offered in small volumes.

A cuttlefish bone should be provided for additional calcium and to allow the bird to wear down its beak.