

# SWIFT ACCOMMODATION

In nature swifts nest in dark cavities and roof spaces with light usually only infiltrating from the entrance hole. The chicks never leave this area until time for them to finally fledge, but from quite a young age they will spend hours watching the world and sky from the entrance, as illustrated in this photograph.



This is their natural habitat, without the security of their own “home” they will not be able to develop their natural behaviour to best advantage. Any creature needs to be stress free and feel safe and secure in its own space to thrive and also recover from injury.

Young and adult swifts come to recognise their own cage, so this should not be **moved** or changed in anyway. They will eagerly return to their cage after being fed.

Swift cages have very specific requirements which are easy to provide for the benefit of both swift and carer.

- **Feather safe-** Absolutely **No** bars or wire mesh, exercises could fatally damage feathers.
- **Escape proof-** Swifts who feel insecure will escape and seek a dark place to hide.
- **Adequate dimensions-** To provide full wing span for exercises.
- **Natural light-** When possible.
- **Gentle controlled heat source-** For the very young, injured or weak birds.
- **Nest shape**

**Smooth plastic containers are best, easy to keep clean and do not damage feathers.**

This can be a basic storage box or the more luxurious rodent cage; both are illustrated here and are used very successfully by several specialised rehabilitators experiencing similar results.

**Storage Box** - Cheaper, takes up less space.

**Rodent Cage** – Allows in natural light, more space, hanging on all sides, escape proof whilst allowing the birds to look out at the world. Enables the observation of occupants without causing any disturbance, this is invaluable for monitoring progress.

**Rodent Cage -** (Size recommended for Cavies) internal dimensions 64 x 40 x height 27cms.



### The Nest Shape



Nest shape placed in the dark covered area of the cage

### Providing Warmth



A heat regulated pad placed under the nest area for weak birds gives the opportunity for them to move to a cooler part of the cage if required.

## COMPANIONS

**Young swifts** are very sociable and will benefit from company of their own kind.

**Adult swifts** need to be paired with caution as they are territorial regarding their nest sites, if an adult is established in a cage it may not appreciate an “intruder”. Sometimes it is better to put the two birds into a new cage and observe carefully.



A lone chick will be comforted by a dark soft fluffy blanket.



A “dummy” swift can also be used.



Age variations are not a problem.



2 or 3 chicks are the normal family group.



Exercise time, these can be violent!



Feathers could easily be damaged if this was a cage with metal bars.



Swifts do not perch, but cling to vertical surfaces.



Chicks defecate away from their nest.



Clean and bright eyed. **Essential!**

These photos are of chicks hand reared by Hilde Matthes in Germany, using the methods as described in the Hand Rearing document included on this information CD.

For more detailed information and accommodation for longer stay patients check out the Frankfurt Clinic website. <http://apusapus.net/accommodation.html>