



BIRD NUTRITION

Pet birds are becoming very popular. They make great companions for people not able to have a dog or a cat. Birds are social, vocal animals and can be loving pets with adequate training and handling.

The most common mistake new bird owners make is feeding only a seed diet. Seeds alone lack many of the vitamins, minerals and amino acids needed by your pet bird. It is equivalent to feeding your kids a diet of potato chips and candy. It will eventually cause malnutrition, obesity and an increased susceptibility to disease. Ideally pet birds should be fed a pelleted diet supplemented with a variety of table foods. Pelleted diets have been formulated to be as close to nutritionally complete as we know. We should be feeding 80% pellets and 20% vegetables, beans, fruit and some pasta, rice and meats that have been cooked and cooled. Generally anything healthy for you to eat is healthy for your parrot. The most important exceptions to this are avocado and chocolate which can be toxic to birds. It is also important to avoid caffeine and alcohol.

Transition for a “seed junkie” can be difficult and requires a lot of patience. Birds are very slow to trust and accept new foods and will always prefer their original familiar seed diet. It can take 2 months to convert your bird to a pelleted diet. There are several methods to accomplish this feat. You can try feeding the pellets moistened with fruit juice. You can make the pellets the only food in the cage except for two separate seed meal time offerings of 30 minutes twice a day. You can also try mixing the pellets and seed together slowly increasing the ration of pellets to seed. It also helps if you pretend to be eating the pellets in front of the bird.

Whatever method you choose to try and convert your bird to a healthier diet, it is vital that you closely monitor your bird’s droppings daily while changing diets. A bird’s droppings are made up of three parts: the stool which is normally brown or green; the urates, which are white; and the urine, which is the wet spot around the droppings. If the number of droppings drastically decreases or if only the white material is seen in a 24 hour period, your bird is not eating and can starve himself. Return to the original diet and contact us right away!

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