



BRISBANE BIRD & EXOTICS
VETERINARY SERVICE

Quality Care in Sickness and in Health



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Keeping Your Parrot Healthy: Feeding

Introduction

Birds in the wild have evolved to eat a large variety of natural foods, which vary seasonally and regionally. Unfortunately, it is not possible for us to replicate the natural diet for our parrots in captivity. A well-nourished bird will live longer, be more resistant to disease and will generally be a happier member of the family. Seed alone is **NOT** a balanced diet.

Seed-based Diets

Seed on its own is primarily either carbohydrates (e.g. millet) and/or fat (e.g. sunflower seed) and lacks a number of vitamins and minerals, as well as protein. Although the nutritional deficits can be balanced to a certain extent by adding other foods to the diet (such as pulses, vegetables and some fruits), birds tend to select only certain items, leading to malnourishment.

Pellet Diets

Pelleted diets are a better alternative to seed-based diets, as the bird is unable to preferentially select specific items, such as a favourite type of seed. Pellets are also more nutritionally complete, with each pellet containing all essential vitamins, minerals and proteins. There are many different brands of pellets available, however two we recommend are **Harrison's Organic Pellets**, and **Roudybush Pellets**.

Converting Your Bird to Pellets

Birds can sometimes be hesitant to try new things. The simplest method of introducing a bird to a pelleted diet is to place a container of pellets in the cage next to a favourite perch, or near the seed container. You may also wish to sprinkle some pellets over the seed. Vegetables and a small amount of fruit can be placed in the cage as well. Over time you should notice that more pellets are being consumed and less seed, and the amount of seed provided can gradually be reduced.

During the conversion process it is important to be mindful of how much your bird is eating in order to avoid excessive weight loss or other complications.

NEVER STARVE YOUR BIRD TO MAKE IT EAT PELLETS. THIS CAN RESULT IN SERIOUS COMPLICATIONS.

There are several parameters that need to be observed to aid in monitoring the conversion process:

- Weight
- Droppings
- Amount eaten

These are fully explained in our care sheet '**Pellet Conversion for Birds**', as are other tips and conversion techniques. Please read this before converting your bird to pellets.

If any weakness, illness, or abnormal behaviour is observed during the conversion process, immediately replace the normal diet before phoning us for advice.

When to Change the Diet

NEVER change the diet of a thin or sick bird – the physiologic stress of diet changing may be more than they can tolerate. Feed thin or sick birds their usual diet (even if poorly balanced) until recovered, and then look at changing the diet to a better quality one.

The amount of time that a bird takes to convert from seed to pellets varies, and should not be rushed. It may take up to 4 to 6 weeks for a bird to fully convert to a new diet, so ensure that you have the time available for monitoring the bird for that duration.

What Other Foods Can I Offer?

For most parrots, we recommend that pellets be 80% of the total diet, with the remainder being vegetables, fruits and a small amount of nuts and seeds. Cockatiels and budgies should be fed no more than 50% pelleted diet.

Generally the darker the vegetable, the more nutritious it is. Recommended vegetables include corn, capsicum, zucchini, broccoli, squash, tomatoes, sweet potato, pumpkin, carrot, beans, peas, and other pulses. Vegetables should make up approximately 10-15% of the parrot diet. AVOID celery stalks, iceberg lettuce, and excessively watery fruits (these are not toxic, but are too dilute to be truly nutritious).

Recommended fruits include kiwi, strawberries, blueberries, grapes, small amounts of apple, melons and stone fruits (but remove the stones first). Fruits should make up no more than 5% of the diet.

NEVER FEED YOUR BIRD AVOCADO, ONION, RHUBARB, GARLIC OR CHOCOLATE (THESE CAN ALL BE TOXIC TO BIRDS).

