



Psittacine Diet

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A good diet is one of the most crucial things that we can provide for our companion birds. A diet void of nutrients will weaken a bird's immune system making them more susceptible to illness & disease. The exact diet of these animals in the wild is not well known and we do not have access to most of their native foods. So the best we can do at this time is to offer a wide variety of nutrient rich foods. Remember that each species has different nutritional requirements so it is best to do some research and cater a diet to that species. Also be aware that everything sold for birds is not necessarily good for them so it pays to be an informed consumer and be aware of the needs of these special animals. If you are unsure if a product is appropriate for your bird consult your avian vet. ****This diet plan is not suitable for Lories.***

Pellets: A high quality pellet should be offered daily as well as a variety of fresh foods. Pellets should consist of 25-50% of the diet depending on the species. Remember that fancy colored pellets are designed to attract the eye of the human consumer. Ideally a pellet should be all natural containing no chemical insecticides, herbicides or fungicides, no preservatives and no artificial colors, sweeteners or flavors. Currently there is no perfect pellet but Harrisons, Roudybush, Lafeber, Kaytee Natural, and Mazuri are a few of the good brands available. If your bird will only eat a pellet that smells funky & looks like fruit loops it is better than no pellet at all.

Vegetables: Parsley, cilantro, tomatoes, chayote, sweet potatoes/yams, comfrey, mustard greens, kale, dandelion greens, carrots, beats, turnip & turnip greens, radishes, peppers, squash, pumpkin, broccoli, green beans, bok choy, endive, ginger. Corn is not a vegetable but rather a grain. Corn is high in sugar so it should be avoided or given as a limited

indulgence. Be aware that spinach, chard, beet greens, onions & garlic contain oxalic acid that inhibits the absorption of calcium.

Fruits: Berries, mango, papaya, pomegranate, kiwi, figs, cherries, melons, & citrus. Remember that even though **they're** natural, fruits still contain sugar. Limit the fruit in your bird's diet and stick to the darker more nutrient rich fruits like the ones listed above. While the occasional grape or piece of apple is okay, diets high in sugar can often lead to undesirable behaviors. So it is wise to keep it as an occasional treat.

Beans, Legumes & Grains: Black-eyed peas, pinto beans, kidney beans, adzuki beans, anasazi, green and yellow split peas, garbanzo beans, flageolet beans, black beans, mung beans, lentils, wheatberry, spelt, quinoa, triticale, brown &/or wild rice (whole, slow cook), buckwheat. All of your grains should be whole and unhulled. You can make your own cooking mix from the bulk bins of health food stores. I store my grains separate from the beans & legumes because I soak the beans and legumes overnight before cooking them.

Seeds: Pet bird seed mixes are rarely more than empty calories, void of nutrients and can potentially contain aflatoxins that can damage your birds liver over time. If seed is fed, choose organic human grade products. You can make your own mix from the bulk bins at health food stores like Whole Foods and Sunflower Market. High quality organic human grade seed mixes can also be purchased from www.birdelicious.com. Some parrots like cockatiels & budgerigars are seed & grain eaters in the wild and do require it as a part of their regular diet. For most species of parrots seed should only be a very small part of the diet.

Sprouts: Seeds, beans, legumes & grains can also be sprouted to increase their nutrient value. Many sprouting methods are available. The key is to rinse them often (at least twice a day), provide adequate air circulation & discard slimy or smelly sprouts.

Nuts: Almonds, walnuts, filberts, pecans, pine nuts, & pistachios. Cracking the nut shell and working to get the nut inside is a good activity for your bird. You can slightly crack the shell for smaller birds. Peanuts

are very high in fat and the shells are a common source of aflatoxins so they should be limited or avoided.

Nutritional supplements: Spirulina, palm oil, essential fatty acids like Usana Optomega Oil (www.usana.com). Cuttlebone or mineral blocks should be offered at all times. Grit is unnecessary and should not be given to parrots.

Avoid: Avocado, rhubarb leaves, uncooked garlic, uncooked onion, uncooked lima beans, fruit pits, alcohol, chocolate & caffeine. Limit salt and sugar and remember that fruit sugars are still sugar.

Tips: Sometimes presentation of a food can make all the difference. Just like a child that will not eat a sandwich unless the crust is cut off, sometimes simply cutting a vegetable in a different way, or mixing it with a favorite food can increase the chance of getting it eaten. Vegetables can be finely chopped in a food processor and mixed in with your bird's favorite food. Vegetables can be prepped in advance and used for several days. If you add fruit to this it may spoil faster. Discard uneaten fresh foods after about an hour to avoid spoilage and bacteria growth.

When diet changes are being made it is a good idea to monitor your bird's weight to insure he is not losing weight. You should also watch your bird's stool for fecal matter. If fecal matter is present in the droppings your bird is eating. You can monitor your bird's body condition by feeling the keel bone that runs vertically down the center of the breast muscle. If the keel protrudes your bird is thin. Your avian veterinarian can also assess your bird's body condition.

Recipe for Psittacine to enjoy!

Easy Crock Pot Mash:

The basic recipe consists of:

1 ½ cup bean/legume/lentil mix, rinsed well

2 cups grain mix, rinsed well

6 cups water

2 ½ Tbsp Palm Oil

Soak beans, legumes & lentils overnight. Put all of the ingredients into the crock pot and cook on low all day long. Spices can be added for variety as long as salt and sugar are not used. Mrs. Dash salt free seasonings are an easy choice. Canned pumpkin, sweet potatoes, squash, baby food, & salt free tomatoes sauce can be added to the mix as well. You may need to adjust the amount of water if you do this. If excessive liquid is present at the end of the day turn the pot to high, take the lid off and stir frequently until the water cooks off. Cool the mix in the fridge overnight and freeze in small daily portions. For a single bird, ice cube trays may be used.

Warm a single portion for your bird daily, drizzle with Usana OptOmega oil and stir in a mix of vegetables that have been finely chopped in a food processor. A small amount of wheat germ oil can be added once a week. You can also add your sprouts to this mixture.

Most birds readily accept this cooked mash and it allows you to sneak vegetables to them that they may not otherwise eat.