

FEEDING YOUR PARROT

Parrots have become increasingly popular pets. Nowadays, fewer wild birds are sold but many English-bred hand-reared young birds are available - and they often make splendid pets because they arrive at their new home already tame.

Unfortunately, the down side is that as much as three-quarters of the disease seen in pet parrots can be due to problems with their diet or their environment. In fact, dietary problems

Parrot mix and complete foods

The traditional way of feeding was parrot mix, made up largely of peanuts and sunflower seed. Fruit would then be given if the bird would take it.

We now know that this parrot mix is highly unsuitable as the main part of a parrot's diet: it is too high in fat; too low in fibre. It is also low in many other essential nutrients, such as calcium that is needed for healthy bone and muscle and for breeding (egg laying), vitamin A and the 'essential fatty acids' that promote healthy skin and feathers.

Complete foods for parrots are now available which supply all these essential nutrients. Hence, you can quite reasonably expect young hand-reared birds to have been weaned onto these complete foods rather than parrot mix.

Making the change

Sometimes a parrot will change over to the complete food without any trouble, but in other cases it refuses even to look at the new food! Older parrots or birds that are 'hooked' on parrot mix for so many years may take a long time to change to complete food.

In these cases, you have to resign yourself to being sneaky, and working at it over a period of time. Some things to try are:

- Make up a mix of fruit and vegetables, and feed this to your bird, only allowing it parrot mix for a short time in the morning and evening, then gradually mix the complete food in with the soft food.
- Moisten the complete food with fruit juice.
- Try eating the complete food yourself! Lots of pet parrots are willing to try something they see their owner enjoying!
- If all else fails, talk to us about adding essential vitamins and minerals to your bird's diet until you can get it to try the new diet.
- Once your bird is eating the complete food, it can still

have fruit, vegetables and tit-bits - but the complete food should be the main part of the diet.

What sort of complete food?

The two current leading brands are "Kay-Tee" and "Pretty Bird". They are both excellent products.

Recipe for a tempting good soft mix!

- Lightly cooked rice (preferably brown rice)
- Peas (lightly cooked from frozen)
- Sweetcorn (thawed, not cooked)
- Grated carrot
- Grated celery
- Sprouted mung beans
- Chopped apple, orange and other fruits, but keep the fruits as a small part of the whole mix
- A little grated cheese or a handful of a good complete dry cat food a couple of times a week, to supply extra protein and calcium.

A mix like this can often be used to gradually wean a parrot off its seed mix.

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