How to Balance Bird Exercise with Proper Diet & Nutrition

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

As with any animal, an overweight bird is more likely to have a shortened life span, as well as a poorer quality of life. The extra weight puts a burden on multiple organs of the body as well as the legs and feet. Obesity in caged birds is more common than you may think.

"Eat like a bird" is one of those phrases we all joke about, since wild birds are known to have big appetites. They also fly and forage for food, must maintain their body temperature, and migrate, so they need all the calories they can get. Their pet bird cousins could eat that much, especially of high fat/calorie foods (sometimes they taste the best!) but since they don't fly as much, forage for every meal, or migrate, they obviously don't need all those calories.

Feed your bird correctly (see our bird food pyramid) and remember there are always other ways to balance your bird's calories eaten/calories used. One easy solution: make sure your bird gets plenty of exercise.

Playing with your bird two or three times a day is one great way to provide exercise, as is having a flight cage available, like our Large Economy Flight Cage. A play area especially for your bird, like a Big Steps Playground or the Parrot Playpen can help interaction with you and alone-play.

You may have to start exercise sessions in very small increments. A great in-cage way to give your pet bird more exercise may surprise you – ladders or spiral rope perches (a customer favorite is the Sisal Twister, made in all sizes) have been found to let your bird get more movement since he must step up, down, around, and balance himself – expending more energy then he would on a straight perch. Place favorite toys at the top and bottom to entice your bird to move up and down several times a day.

Wood or plastic ladders, sisal or cotton perches that can be bent every which way can also give your bird much-needed variety. Remember to offer your bird several different types of perches since different perches address different needs.

*Unauthorized use of any images, thumbnails, illustrations, descriptions, article content, or registered trademarks of **Foster & Smith, Inc.** is strictly prohibited under copyright law. Site content, including photography, descriptions, pricing, promotions, and availability are subject to change without notice. These restrictions are necessary in order to protect not only our copyrighted intellectual property, but also the health of pets, since articles or images that are altered or edited after download could result in misinformation that may harm companion animals, aquatic life, or native species.*