Baby Steps: The Basics of Hand-feeding and Weaning

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Breeding and raising birds is a challenging responsibility recommended only for those who are willing to invest the time, patience, research, experience, and equipment necessary for proper bird care. If you're considering breeding, or find yourself having purchased a baby that needs to be hand-fed, please seek out the advice of an experienced breeder and avian veterinarian.

Caring for a baby bird that needs to be hand-fed means you essentially have to be the mother bird. This includes keeping the baby warm, clean, and fed on demand. Expect around-the-clock care to meet the appropriate feeding schedule for your bird's species.

Hand-feeding

The proper hand-feeding formula can help you get your bird off to the right start. You may choose to mix your own or use a convenient packaged mix. Packaged mixes range from those that you cook and cool to easy mix formulas such as Lafeber's Nutri-Start or Kaytee Exact Hand Feeding Formula.

Weaning

Baby birds should be weaned at specific ages depending on their species. It is important to recognize signs that a baby is ready to begin the weaning process as well as indications of a possible problem (such as a bacterial or yeast infection) which would prevent the bird from weaning. Weaning time depends on a variety of factors, including your bird's general health, species, age, and other environmental factors.

Weaning formulas should be palatable while providing the correct nutrients to help your bird grow. A suggestion we have is Exact Conversion and Weaning Diet.

When hand-feeding and weaning, the right skills and knowledge will make the difference between an insecure problem bird and a confident, social bird. A kind, gentle, and patient human hand feeder teaches a bird to be accepting, gentle, trusting and loving with humans.

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