

Baby Steps: The Basics of Hand-feeding and Weaning

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



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.

