Proper Bird Nutrition is Key to Feather Color

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

In the wild, an especially colorful male bird will attract a female for reproduction because his brilliant feather coloring says, "this bird is healthy." The color of a bird's feathers results from pigment within the feather, the light that reflects off of it, and other factors including age, gender, and certain foods a bird eats.

Feather color is determined by the presence of various pigments, including melanins, porphyrins, and carotenoids (think "carrot").

- Melanin is the pigment responsible for black, grays, browns, and dull reds. It is synthesized by a bird's body from amino acids and is stored in specialized cells surrounding the developing feather.
- Porphyrins are red and green pigments that are produced by cells in the feather follicle.
- Carotenoids are responsible for bright reds, oranges, and yellows. Some of the carotenoids identified in feathers are xanthophyll, zeaxanthin, canthaxanthin, capsanthin (found in chili peppers), and astaxanthin. Each of these carotenoids impart a different color or hue to a bird's feathers.

Quality foods, as well as color-enhancing supplements, give your feathered companion healthy looking, radiant feathers that will light up any room.

WE RECOMMEND

Kaytee Exact Rainbow Diet, with species specific formulas, supplies nutrients necessary for brighter color and excellent health.

Quiko® Intensive is used to intensify red color or preserve the red of all birds with the red factor.

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