# Bird Nutrition: Avoid Pitfalls That Harm Your Bird

*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*

We as bird owners have sole control over our birds' nutrition. It's ironic then, that poor nutrition is one of the leading causes of premature death in our birds. The last thing we would want to do is feed our bird in a way that leads to disease. So how can we prevent it? When we diligently apply a few nutrition basics, we're more likely to prevent the downward spiral from malnutrition to disease. Consistency is key.

### say no to seed-only diets

Parrots love seeds, but seeds are inappropriate as a daily diet for psittacine birds. Seeds are nutritionally incomplete. Over time, seed-only consumption leads to nutritional deficiencies and malnutrition, even in birds that appear obese. Have your avian veterinarian examine your bird, and if he is healthy enough to make a dietary switch, we recommend pellets as the base diet for most bird species, along with fresh vegetables and a sprinkling of fruits, seeds, and nuts. Follow your veterinarian's

### 4 it's not just WHAT you feed, it's HOW

In nature, birds often find their food underneath or wedged inside obstacles like shells, branches, or layers of leaves. To keep pet birds interested in their food, their food should be presented in a variety of ways. Hide pellets inside hollowed out toys. Mix his pellets with inedible items like wooden toy pieces and cotton and leather strips. Offer fresh vegetables on a shish-kabob. Be creative – give your bird



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recommendations for making the switch.

## 2 understand fortified seeds

Seed hulls have little nutritional value; they are mostly complex carbohydrate of an insoluble nature. Most birds cast aside the hull in favor of the meatier center. Fortified seed mixes contain most of the fortification in the hull – a fact that poses little benefit to birds that discard hulls.

## 3 avoid vitamin over-supplementation

Fat-soluble Vitamins A, D3, and E can build up in your bird's fat tissues, causing toxicity if overdosed. These are also vitamins for which birds can have deficiencies. Trust your species-specific pellet diet to provide the correct amount, and supplement only upon veterinarian recommendation. Note: Though birds can suffer toxicity when overdosed with Vitamin A, toxicity is not a risk with beta carotene, the precursor of Vitamin A. Birds process beta carotene into Vitamin A as their body needs it.

the joy of working for a meal.

## 5 know which foods are toxic to birds

They include chocolate (baker's, semisweet, milk, dark), alcohol, avocado, salt, yeast dough, coffee (grounds, beans, chocolate espresso beans), tea, colas, and other caffeinated beverages. Avoid feeding apple seeds, or the pits from cherries, plums, apricots, and peaches. Onions and garlic may also pose toxicity risks to certain birds.

## 6 insist on sanitation

Food and water bowls that are not cleaned daily become petrie dishes for the growth of dangerous bacteria and mold. Likewise, decomposed food in water bowls and regurgitated food on toys and accessories all contribute to the growth of potentially dangerous microorganisms that can make your bird sick. Insist on a sanitary feeding environment; remove uneaten fresh foods at day's end, provide fresh water (in a clean dispenser) daily, and wash food bowls daily. If your tap water contains metal toxins or high bacteria levels, use a tap water



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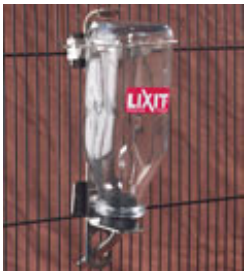
filter.

## WE RECOMMEND

AvianMaintenance FruitBlend
meets the complete nutritional needs of many species of birds.




Glass Water Bottle
prevents residual bacterial contamination of your bird's water.

Kabobs
are a great way to feed nutritious snacks to your pet bird.



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