

# Nutritional Choices for your Bird

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

## Daily Nutrition for Healthy Birds



The question of what to feed and why is often unclear for many bird owners. To answer this, it is helpful knowing what is in the basic food groups. The following comparison of common food choices should assist you in creating a palatable and nutritious diet.



### Seeds

**Deficiencies:** Vitamins A, D3, Riboflavin, B12, and sometimes E. Minerals such as calcium, iodine, selenium, sodium and certain amino acids.

**Excesses:** Fats.

### Specific seed nutrient content:

- Oil seeds (sunflower, safflower, hemp, flax, nyjer): very high protein (20%-30%), very high fat (30%-50%).
- Grains/cereals (millet, corn, wheat, oats, barley, rice): high carbohydrates (20%-30+%), moderate protein (8%-15%), low fat (2%-5%). Comments: Feeding excess seed can contribute to imbalance of calcium/phosphorous ratio, obesity, and other health problems.



### Fruits

**Deficiencies:** Protein.

**Excesses:** Fats are high in coconut, papaya and palm fruits.

**Comments:** Mostly water, sugar and fiber. Too much can contribute to amino acid imbalance.



## Nuts

**Deficiencies:** Some nuts lack sufficient vitamins.

**Excesses:** Fats.

### Specific nut nutrient content:

- Peanuts, soybeans - high fat (20%-50%), high protein (25%-35%).
- Macadamia nuts - very high fat (73%-74%), moderate protein (7%-9%).

**Comments:** Feeding excess nuts can contribute to obesity, a common problem in birds.



## Vegetables

**Deficiencies:** Protein, except legumes.

**Excesses:** Some vegetables are high in sugars (carrots, beets).

### Specific vegetable nutrient content:

- Richly pigmented vegetables (carrots, beets, sweet potatoes) are generally higher in nutrient value than their paler counterparts. For example, peas, beans- low fat (1%-3%), high protein (20%-25%).
- Poorly pigmented vegetables such as iceberg lettuce and celery are mainly water and fiber.

**Comments:** Most are low in fat.



## Commercial Diets

- Manufactured extruded (cooked) diets are an excellent combination of raw ingredients cooked at high temperature and pressure, killing most bacteria and making the diet very digestible and more palatable.
- Manufactured pelleted diets are similar to extruded diets in composition but cooked at lower temperatures and pressure.

Knowing these facts can help you provide the best diet possible for your avian pet.

