

## Plating up for parrots – what to feed your parrot!

There is a huge amount of misinformation available when it comes to what to feed your parrot. In fact, we would estimate that 90% of our avian clients are feeding their pet bird a sub-optimal diet. A sub-optimal diet can lead to many problems and can often make your parrot more susceptible to illness.

The number one problem that we see is people feeding their parrots an all seed diet. Eating solely seed is the equivalent to us eating junk food as our staple diet - it tastes good however is high in fat and low in just about everything else. Most seeds are very low in vitamins (including vitamins A and D that are very important) and minerals (including Calcium and other crucial components).

Birds that are converted to a well-balanced healthy diet generally live longer, have brighter plumage and higher activity levels. Many breeders also see an increase in successful hatching rates following conversion to an appropriate diet.



There are many differing opinions on the optimal diet to feed your parrot and unfortunately there are very few scientific studies that have been completed on avian nutrition to guide us.

Dietary needs vary greatly from species to species and for this reason the following is a very general recommendation for most commonly kept parrot species, except lorikeets and other nectar-feeding species. From current studies and information available we generally recommend a combination of the following:

- 40-70% premium commercial pellet appropriate to your species of parrot
- 20-35% vegetables (recommended vegetables include: capsicum, broccoli, chilli, corn, carrot, zucchini, squash, spinach, pumpkin, sweet potato, beans and peas) and sprouted seed
- 7-15% fruits (ie melons, strawberries, banana, blue berries, grapes, peaches, pear, apple) and native vegetation (most Australian blossoms, gum nuts and plants are okay to feed – ensure these are free of wild bird droppings/contact). Please ensure that all stone fruits and apples are free of their seeds.
- 10-15% quality commercial seed mix appropriate to your species of parrot.
- 1-2% snacks for training and as treats (unsalted nuts (ie macadamia, cashew and walnut), pasta, eggs and brown rice).

It is very easy to decide to convert your bird over to the diet aforementioned however the difficulty lies in converting your parrot from the 'really tasty non-nutritious' diet of seed to the 'healthy but possibly not as tasty' diet previously described.

We recommend the following method to achieve this:

- Day 1: Mix in the pellets with the bird's normal diet so that it makes up roughly 10% of the total feed in their bowl.
- Continue this for the first 2-3 days then increase the percentage of pellets to 20% for the next 3 days.



- Continue this trend by adding an extra 10% of pellets every 2-3 days until you reach your target.
- At all times offer a range of vegetables, fruits and other foods as listed above.
- Provide fresh food and pellets each day.
- Weigh your bird regularly (generally first thing in the morning) to ensure that they are not losing too much weight and are eating adequate amounts of the new diet. Never change entirely to any new diet without making sure they are eating adequate amounts of it.

We find that most birds will gradually start picking at the pellets, then this will progress to munching on a couple of them and then finally eating them readily.



For those really stubborn parrots another method of conversion is to mix your birds usual seed with some crushed up pellets in a bowl with a small amount of water. Once thoroughly mixed, the mixture is clumped together and left to dry. Once dried it is then offered to your bird. Generally, even the most stubborn of all parrots will eat this mixture readily.

It is common that the faecal component of your bird's droppings may change colour following dietary change – this is to be expected however if you are at all worried about this please consult an avian veterinarian. Very dark or very light faecal components may be of concern.

There are some foods that should never be fed to your parrot. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Avocado
- Chocolate
- Any beverages containing caffeine or alcohol
- Onion, garlic or rhubarb

Good luck and please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

