

The  
**Unusual**  
Pet Vets

# Captive Foraging

WILL WORK  
FOR FOOD!



Written by: Jennifer Harris and Hannah Gallagher

Wild birds spend many hours flying long distances to forage for food. By contrast, pet birds are often offered 'free' food in a bowl. This allows our birds to eat for only a short period of time, and the rest of the day is often spent socialising, preening and sleeping. Over time, these behaviours can turn into over-grooming, self mutilation, excessive vocalisations and inappropriate human/ bird relationships.

Simulating natural behaviours with food based enrichment is a fantastic way to keep your bird stimulated when in and out of the cage, which will often lead to a more mentally stable companion.

We hope that this book gives you some ideas as to how you can provide this.



## What You Need



Paper based natural (non-clumping) kitty litter is a great medium to get birds foraging for their pellets.



Measuring spoons can help ensure that we aren't overfeeding or underfeeding our birds.



Digital scales are an essential item for the home. By weighing our birds regularly we can ensure they are thriving on any changes to their diet.

## A guide to the amount of pellets for large birds.

Overfeeding can be as unhealthy for your bird as feeding a lack of variety in the diet. This is a guide to the amount of pellets for small birds.



We recommend to gradually add bird safe kitty litter to the pellets over a period of weeks.



### IMPORTANT

Make sure you weigh your bird on a regular basis when performing any diet changes.



A foraging tray is easy enrichment to provide. A foraging tray could be a bowl, a plastic container, a pot plant base or a bird safe baking tray!

You can hang a large stainless steel bowl in the cage if your bird isn't a ground dwelling species.



**FORAGE BOWL**



**FORAGE TRAY**



**FORAGE TRAY  
IN AVIARY**



**Foot toys and natural items  
can be added for extra  
enrichment.**



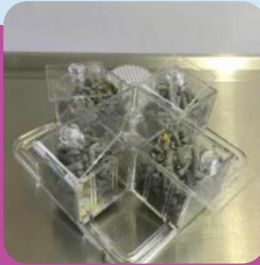
Treats such as sunflower seeds or small pieces of nuts can be hidden in foot toys or straws. These items can keep your birds beak busy while out of the cage and on their play stations.



## No food should be free.

In the wild your bird would spend hours foraging for their food. We want to replicate this as much as possible in the home environment. The more time they spend foraging for their food then the less time they have for abnormal behaviours such as feather plucking, screaming, stereotypical behaviour or unwanted sexual behaviour.

The kitty litter and pellet mixture can be used in a variety of commercial foraging toys. A small pinch of seed can be added to entice your bird to a new toy.



## Lorikeet Wet and Dry Foraging

Lorikeets can forage for their food too! Kitty litter can be added to their dry mix and marbles are a great addition to wet mix. This allows them to roll the mixture around the medium and utilise their feathered tongue as they would in the wild.



## Chicken Foraging

Even chickens can have enrichment items. Cat and Guinea Pig toys can be used as fun pellet and treat dispensers.



## Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

An example of fresh fruit and vegetables that you can provide for your bird. See our handouts as a guide for safe foods.



We recommend a daily portion of fruit and vegetables for a cockatoo is  $\frac{3}{4}$  vegetables and  $\frac{1}{4}$  fruit



## How To Make A Foraging Food Toy



Place a small amount of paper on the bottom of the baffle cage. The paper will stop the food from falling through the bars and add the chopped fruit & vegetables into the baffle cage on top of the paper.



Loosely wrap the fruit and vegetables with paper so that the birds can still see some of the items. Fill the cage with the lightly wrapped fruit and vegetables.



Once your bird has mastered the partially wrapped fruit and vegetables it is time to increase the difficulty. Next you can move to wrapping all of the fruit and vegetables tightly so they can't see any of the food items. It is very important to weigh your birds regularly during this stage.

### TOP TIP

You can use household items to increase the difficulty of the baffle cage. Cardboard boxes, toilet rolls and cardboard rolls are all great items to use. Place your wrapped food items in the box or tube before placing them in the baffle cage.





To make the baffle cage more difficult we use cardboard to line the inside. You can use foot toys or toy parts with treats placed inside as extra rewards.



Native blossoms and gumnuts make wonderful additions to the baffle cage.



## Other Foraging Ideas

