

Commercial Bird Pellets Good Nutrition??



Finally, I have noticed an ever slowly but increasing amount of skepticism among my bird owning friends towards the many commercial bird foods available these days. Many of the manufactures of these pre-packaged and processed foods claim that their diets duplicate nature or even boast that they are an improvement over nature itself. PLEASE!!!

Is it really realistic to think that we finite humans could duplicate nature in its wholeness and complexity? Improve upon nature?? Are they serious??? How in the world could a dry, processed, fabricated diet ever match or exceed the outstanding quality that can be found in foods God produces in a natural foods diet?

With all the pre-packaged, prepared food choices now on the market, many bird owners have become somewhat dazed about the dos and don'ts of good avian nutrition. From the comments and emails I get, it is clear to see that confusion and frustration abound! While most feed products are touted to be "balanced" or "complete". (just like processed dog and cat food) the manufactures all say that their products are superior in quality. But, are they really?

For some reason, people think that just because a food product is advertised in a magazine or is on your favorite store's shelf that it is safe and healthy to feed your feathered companions. Unfortunately, this is far from the truth. If you haven't already done so, it is time you take a closer look at these feed product labels and make sure you can define each ingredient for the future welfare and love of your birds. I will warn you though; you may be very surprised and not very happy with what you find.

The way in which you feed your birds is of course a very personal choice. However, this choice should be based on information gathered from many sources and some research on your part. I know that you have heard from your bird's Breeder, your veterinarian and even your well meaning friends, as well as advertisements in avian publications that will all influence your decision. Just remember though, while you may receive advice on feeding from well-meaning individuals, you need to do your homework and research this advice before putting it into action.

Many bird owners have decided recently that they do not want to feed their birds a dry, fabricated diet (pellets), as it does not meet their standards as a quality or a "natural" diet. Some bird owners have never fed a fabricated/processed diet to their birds, but have always fed a whole foods diet that is fresh and varied in content. This natural diet usually consists of fresh sprouts and organically grown foods when they are available. Certified organically grown produce is usually your best option and can supply your bird(s) with the top quality nutrition they deserve. Why would anyone want it any other way?

Along with the invention of the "scientifically" formulated feeds ("meals in a bag") so in demand these days, more and more bird owners, with good intentions, are relying on pellets and manufactured handfeeding formulas. They have come to believe these to be the proper source of all nutrients and are so convenient. Sure, the manufacturers promote their products in a very convincing manner with the "nutritionally complete" written in bold print on the label and after all, a pellet diet is a neat, convenient

meal in a bag, sure to stay fresh for months while waiting for you to purchase it off the pet store or veterinary office shelf. And of course, they claim that this bag consists of wonderful ingredients that could not be found anywhere else on earth and includes everything your birds will ever require for health and a long life. Come on people! Really! Some of these meals in a bag are also very pretty in color, they are sure to brighten up any birdcage with their presence, even if they don't brighten your bird's appetites. Sheesh!

Do you ever stop to wonder what on earth made them so colorful? Could it be fresh fruit and vegetable juices? Or, maybe it's the chemical dyes so commonly used in these products to make them so eye appealing. Was that the color No. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 40, or all of the above? Shouldn't you also be questioning what magic trick was used to keep these foods fresh on the shelves for who knows how long?

Then finally, don't forget that they have to make sure those little shapes in the bag taste good. Is artificial flavoring used as well? Or perhaps just a scoop or two of sugar is added to each "healthy" batch of feed. Yes, that will make the product complete! almost... whoops, now don't forget to add all those synthetic nutrients and vitamins since any true nutrition that may have been in the ingredients in the first place has now been cooked away. Just a scoopful of pellets a day keeps the doctor away. Again, PLEASE! This is certainly not what I would put my faith in for a healthy avian species appropriate diet.

There are surely, many bird enthusiasts that use commercial diets and therefore, the manufacturing of such "food" is BIG business. But does their "guaranteed adequate nutritional balance" automatically come with the convenient pellet form? How many wild parrots you have seen on T.V. fly down to their local pet shop and buy pretty colored pellets for the week?

There are so many nutrients, live enzymes and natural medicinal components that have been discovered in fresh foods, so many more that are currently being investigated and some that we aren't even aware of yet. So to call a commercial feed complete and even close to nature is a huge exaggeration to say the least!

Here are just some of the risks involved in feeding your birds some of the commercial bird feeds available.

It is nearly impossible to provide your birds a healthy diet out of a bag, jar or canister. Extruded and heat-treated diets leave much to be desired. Most all of these feed products undergo extreme high heat in order to kill any bacteria that may be lurking in the ingredients used. The heat-treatment destroys the naturally occurring enzymes contained in the original food, which had they remained would have assisted in the digestion of those foods. Food enzymes are an important factor in your bird's diet and they come from fresh raw, uncooked foods.

Feeding a dry, fabricated, pellet diet is kind of like feeding a crushed vitamin and mineral supplement without the fresh foods required for digesting and assimilating it. No enzymes will lead to impaired digestion and in turn lead to a weakened immune system and disease.

Remember, that in order to maintain a shelf life, the majority of these diets contain potentially toxic chemical preservatives, i.e., BHT, BHA, and Ethoxyquin. BHT and BHA are used in rubber and petroleum products. Ethoxyquin is used as a pesticide for fruit. These synthetic antioxidants are used in human and animal foods to preserve their fat content. They help break the chain of "free radicals" and prevent microbiological spoilage and rancidity.

This one really cracked me up, one of the major brands BRAGS the following: "Extrusion cooking enhances carbohydrate bioavailability. More digestible than cold-pressed pelleted diets or seed mixtures, and offer maximum digestibility and nutrient absorption". This is nuts! Birds were not designed to eat cooked foods, ever seen a parrot roasting grain or frying a bug with some flowers? Cooking grains may enhance carbohydrate bioavailability for a human but not for a bird!

Have you looked at the ingredients used to make the pellets? Listed below are the ingredients of the most popular pellets on the market today. While you read through the ingredients, remember, these are not only cooked ingredients but ask yourself if these are things a wild parrot would seek out and eat in the jungle:

*Ground Shelled Sunflower Seeds, *Ground Hullless Barley, *Ground Soybeans, *Ground Shelled Peanuts, *Ground Green Peas, *Ground Lentils, *Ground Yellow Corn, *Ground Rice, *Ground Toasted Oat Groats, Psyllium, *Ground Alfalfa, Calcium Carbonate, Spirulina, Montmorillonite Clay, Ground Dried Sea Kelp, Vitamin E Supplement, Sea Salt, Vitamin A Supplement, Vitamin D3 Supplement, Niacin Supplement, Vitamin B12 Supplement, Riboflavin Supplement, d-Calcium Pantothenate, Pyridoxine Hydrochloride, d-Biotin, Thiamine Mononitrate, Sodium Selenite. *CERTIFIED ORGANIC INGREDIENT

Ground corn, soybean meal, cracked wheat, wheat germ meal, vegetable oil, sucrose, dicalcium phosphate, calcium carbonate, iodized salt, DL-methionine, choline chloride, ascorbic acid, natural mixed tocopherols, rosemary extract, citric acid, natural and artificial colors, artificial flavors, zinc oxide, copper sulfate, manganous oxide, calcium iodate, sodium selenite, vitamin A, vitamin E, vitamin D3, vitamin K, vitamin B12, thiamine, niacin, calcium pantothenate, pyridoxine hydrochloride, riboflavin, Ground Wheat, Peanut Meal, Soy Oil, Soy Meal, Hydrated Sodium Calcium Aluminosilicate, Yucca schidigera Extract, Salt, Calcium Carbonate, L-Lysine, DL-Methionine, Mixed Tocopherols, Rosemary Extract, Ascorbic Acid, Citric Acid, Lecithin, Silicon Dioxide (carrier for liquid antioxidants), Sodium Selenite (on Calcium Carbonate), Niacin, Alpha-Tocopherol Acetate (Source of Vitamin E), Biotin, Manganese Sulfate, Calcium Pantothenate, Zinc Oxide, Riboflavin, Pyridoxine Hydrochloride, Vit. A Acetate, Thiamine, Menadione Sodium Bisulfite Complex (Vit K), Cyanocobalamin (VitB12), Vit D3 Sup., Folic Acid, Ethylenediamine Dihydriodide, Propionic Acid, Ammonium Hydroxide, Acetic Acid, Sorbic Acid, Tartaric Acid and natural apple flavoring.

Now looking at these ingredients, please consider these questions.

"Do YOU know if the feed package ingredients you are serving your birds lists chemicals?" (If not, it is time to read the label.)

"Do you know whether or not chemical preservatives were added to the ingredients BEFORE the manufacturer purchased them and created the final feed product?" (If the manufacturer didn't add the chemicals to the feed then they do not have to list them on the label.)

Were you aware that sugar is often added for palatability in the form of sucrose or corn syrup and artificial coloring to please YOUR eye? Did you realize that artificial colors are derived from coal tar dyes or petroleum. Both refined sugar and chemical dyes can cause short term as well as long term damage, by weakening your bird's immune systems and compromising their complete line of defense. For example, over the short term, sugar can cause illnesses, such as yeast (Candida) infections and long term has the potential to cause other health threatening diseases.

Since most of the ingredients in bird foods are actually foreign to them in the wild or even toxic to the body, your bird's body attempts to expel them through the process of detoxification and elimination in the liver and kidneys. Over the long term these nonnutritive ingredients and synthetic as well as chemical additives can cause enlargement of vital organs, hormonal dysfunction, immune system

disorders and degenerative diseases, thus a shorter lifespan.

Why take chances to begin with when much safer and more natural foods and diets are available. The important thing to do, is to look for a natural alternative rather than figure out what the acceptable chemical level might be.

Since all products are not created totally equally and there are different levels of quality, you are responsible to your bird and its health to take a careful look at processed packaging and question these products before you buy them. If you are interested in providing a preservative free, species specific diet to your birds, then check all labels of products before buy and not only define each ingredient for yourself but ask yourself if it something your parrot would find and eat in the wild.

This whole dilemma over bird diets began several years ago when exclusively dry seeds were compared to pellets. Why not compare a whole foods diet consisting of fresh fruits, vegetables, sprouts, flowers, and insects to seeds and/or pellets? Certainly the whole foods diet is superior!

After all is said and done, you, the bird owner must form your own opinion about what is best to feed your birds and have confidence in the choice of bird food you decide to feed.

I personally feel that the best diet in the world for birds is one that emulates their natural diet in the wild; I mean, doesn't it just make sense that these are the foods that God created for our birds to be biologically correct?. A natural home-prepared diet is really not difficult to do correctly and efficiently, and the health rewards for the birds are both great and obvious.

To achieve the best long-term health results, fresh natural foods should make up the majority of your bird's diet. For those who feel they must feed a commercial diet, I personally do not recommend that it make up any more than 10-20% of any bird's diet total diet and of course, find one that is freeze dried or dehydrated vs. extruded and has whole food ingredients, not just cooked cereal!

If one is going to supplement a bird's diet with pellets, then I recommend BirD-icious.

Let's get back to nature and offer the fresh foods that our parrots were intended to thrive on. By doing this, you can keep your parrot's immune systems strong and its body resistant to disease and infection. The basic truths of nutrition are simple, and easy to apply once the understanding is gained. A natural fresh diet has no nutritional competition and is part of what only nature can provide us. After all, God's gifts of nature are the ultimate gifts we can offer our birds.

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