

Get The Most From Your Bird Food

Tips to cutting costs and keeping food fresh.

By Susan Chamberlain

Most of us want to give our birds the best quality bird food possible without going broke. You can feed your bird a healthy, enriched diet and still get the most for your money by maximizing value and reducing waste. Freshness counts! Many manufacturers mark their packages with a “best-by” date so consumers can determine the freshness and shelf-life of a product.

One of the best ways to save money on bird food is to simply reduce waste. There’s no need to fill your bird’s food dish to the brim. Most birds only eat the top few layers of seed or pellets, and the food on the bottom goes to waste. Make sure you’re feeding the appropriate portion for your species of bird. Invest in a gravity feeder, which dispenses food as needed, to further reduce waste. (Note: Do not allow a base diet, such as seed or pellets, to sit more than a couple of days.)

Store your bird’s food in sealed, airtight moisture-resistant containers. For maximum value, purchase only as much as you will use within a month or two. A 30-day supply of food should stay fresh under climate-controlled conditions. Most packaging instructions recommend storing food in a cool, dry place, so avoid keeping food containers by a sunny windowsill or in the cabinet under the kitchen sink. If you freeze or refrigerate your bird’s provisions, make sure they’re packaged so that moisture cannot condense on the seed or pellets, which can cause mold.

Try It Out

Some bird food companies provide veterinarians, retailers and even bird clubs with trial samples of food so customers and members can let their birds try new formulas. Pet shop proprietors sometimes create their own sample packets or smaller-sized retail packages for customers to try new foods with little financial risk.

Ursula Berg and her husband, Karl, own Fancy Feathers Exotic Birds in New Jersey. Their store sells various avian diets, and she advises trying a small amount of a new food before committing to the large-sized package. “Some companies provide trial sizes. With other companies, we buy small-sized packages or make up our own samples for customers. We also educate people about switching their birds to pellets and trying new foods.”

Today’s bird food packaging has greatly improved. Canisters, jars and resealable bags all help keep food fresh and bug-free. However, you might want to rethink buying in bulk if it takes your bird months to consume it. Large-sized packages are priced less per pound, but they might not always be a bargain if you keep a single bird. Smaller-sized packages allow your bird to go through portions while the food is at its freshest.

A little homework can result in big savings. Look for coupons and rebates on food packages in magazines, in bird show programs and on online. Compare prices while shopping. If purchasing food online, make sure it’s from a reputable company and the food stays fresh. Take shipping costs into account when buying online or from mail-order sources. Some online stores offer free shipping.