

What's Their Take On Avian Diets?

Find out what those who make avian diets have to say

By Rose Gordon

We asked manufacturers of avian diets what their experiences have taught them about proportions and pet birds. This is just a selection of what they had to say:

"It is true that we are at the early stage of understanding the nutritional and behavioral needs of captive birds. Based on the research studies conducted at the Hagen Avicultural Research Institute, HARI, an example of the quantities necessary to fulfill the dietary requirements for a healthy double yellow-headed Amazon on a daily basis would be approximately: 30 grams of Tropicana Extruded Formulated Granules, 3 tablespoons of Tropimix Low Fat, and a total of 3 tablespoons of various fruits and veggies, pasta etc."

--Mark Hagen, M.Ag. director of the research Hagen Avicultural Research Institute, Rolf C. Hagen, Inc.
www.hagen.com/hari/welcome.html

"Eighty percent of what a pet bird eats every day should be highly nutritious, extruded nuggets to provide the correct balance of quality ingredients necessary for good health. The nuggets should be fed free choice. The remaining 20 percent of the bird's diet may be a combination of vegetables, fruits and seeds, depending on the pet owner's preference."

--Darlia A. Morris, DVM, director of technical and veterinary affairs at ZuPreem
www.zupreem.com

"The jungle is rich with available food sources and parrots, being foraging animals, expect food to always be available. If a bird has no food available, its stress level increases, along with the probability of problem behaviors. We give our birds an array of foods, including a choice of fruits, veggies, Nutri-berries, Avi-cakes and pellets. When combining various foods, it is important to provide enough food for the entire day, taking into consideration the fact that a healthy parrot will enthusiastically toss approximately 50 percent of its food."

--Dr. Ted Lafeber, president & CEO of Lafeber Company
www.lafeber.com

"Our research finds that, on average, a Congo African grey only consumes about 30 grams of extruded diet daily, which is only a 1/4 cup of food, and a cockatiel only consumes about 11 grams of food daily. If we control the amount of food we are feeding our pet birds, we will help them live a longer, happier life and also help keep their cage and surroundings free from some debris."

--Michelle Goodman, avian research center manager for Central Garden & Pet's avian & small animal business unit including the Kaytee brand
www.central.com

"We recommend feeding the appropriate Harrison's Bird Foods product as 90 percent of the total diet. The remaining 10 percent should consist of certified organic vegetables and fruits - specifically dark yellow meaty or dark green leafy items, such as sweet potatoes, carrots, pumpkin, winter squash, broccoli, parsley, spinach, mango or papaya."

--Dr. Greg J. Harrison, founder and president of Harrison's Bird Foods
www.harrisonsbirdfoods.com/

"Obesity can occur in pet birds when energy (caloric) intake exceeds energy outflow. In these situations, limiting high-caloric foods, providing activity-related treats and toys and ensuring regular exercise are the best means to monitor food consumption and control weight."

--Ronald Reid, Zoologist/Nutritionist, director technical services for Sun Seed Company
www.sunseed.com

"Sunflowers are considered the most complete vegetable protein known. Sunflower's nutritional profiles reflect high levels of essential fatty acids linolenic and linoleic, plus oils leic, oleic, palmitic and stearic. Sunflowers are also high in lecithin and vitamin E. Sunflowers are a high-energy food and need to be fed in moderation, unless of course, your bird receives good exercise."

--Edward J. Schmitt, president of Goldenfeast, Inc.
www.goldenfeast.net

“An Amazon needs a lower fat diet, while a macaw or a grey can use more fat. To me, more fat means a few healthful nuts a day, such as almonds or walnuts, etc. I literally count out my pellets for my smaller birds like Amazons or mini macaws. I can measure a little more by 1/4 cup or 1/2 cup for a larger bird.”

--Adriane Chernus, owner of ParrotNutz parrot Treats, LLC
<http://parrotnutz.com/>

“Hiding fruit bits and nuts in toys, hanging wet greens from the top of the cage, providing a wide variety of fresh and dry foods and, most of all, making sure our birds aren't allowed to choose one food to the exclusion of all others is the job of a responsible bird owner.”

--Deborah Droke, president of Peck n Coo Bird Treats
www.peckncoo.com/

“Birds require a variety of vegetables and greens on a daily basis. Kale, collard, chard, mustard, turnip, beet and dandelion are safe to feed to your bird on daily basis without a reverse affect. All cabbages and bok choy can be served daily. Broccoli and sweet potatoes are to be given daily.”

--Donna Jensen, founder of Winged Flowers
www.wingedflowers.net