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Psittacine Diet Recommendations

Dietary problems are one of the most significant issues facing avian species. An improper diet can worsen the health issues of a pet bird. There are many different species of parrots, and their dietary requirements vary significantly. Below is an overall guideline for most pet parrots, but it does not apply to breeding birds.

- 40% pelleted diet – Overall, pelleted diets provide a fairly good mix of vitamins and minerals for most avian species. Feeding commercially bought pellets, instead of mostly seeds, also helps prevent obesity. The problem with these diets is that they are not specifically created for individual species requirements.
- 30% vegetables – Vegetables should be varied daily. This will prevent your bird from only eating the vegetables that they like. Make sure to feed red and orange vegetables, as these have high vitamin A, which helps prevent upper respiratory infections.
- 20% fruit – Feeding guidelines for fruits are similar to vegetables. Feed a wide variety in small amounts. Be careful to not feed large amounts of fruit seeds as many of them contain cyanide. Avocados are toxic to some birds; therefore it should not be fed at all.
- 10% other – This percentage constitutes seeds, peanuts, and other people foods. Seeds and peanuts tend to cause bacterial infections and fungal toxins, and they lead to obesity and fatty liver failure.

There are a few species that need a little something extra in their diet:

- African Greys should be fed large amounts of calcium (such as eggs with the shell, broccoli, and dark leafy green veggies.) They should also always have access to a cuttlebone.
- Eclectus parrots should be fed large amounts of red and orange vegetables (such as carrots, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, and red bell peppers) because this species is prone to vitamin A deficiencies.
- Cockatoos should be fed nuts (not peanuts) on a regular basis. Many cockatoos also enjoy eating meat and meat products.
- Cockatiels, lovebirds, and budgies/parakeets should be given a larger amount of seed, up to 30% to 40% of the diet.
- Macaws should be given nuts on a regular basis.
- Amazons should rarely be given seeds or peanuts. They tend to have problems with obesity, liver failure, and nutritional deficiencies when given seed.

Most human food can also be safely given to birds. They should not be given any foods with avocado, or fatty foods such as potato chips and French fries. They should not be given caffeine, chocolate, sweets, or alcohol. Most birds are unable to process milk products, so the feeding of such products may result in bacterial infections and diarrhea.

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