



at the heart of critical care

ANIMAL EMERGENCY CENTER

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DIETARY CONVERSION FOR YOUR PET BIRD

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The following will help you introduce your bird to a commercially formulated diet. Several brands including Kaytee Exact, Pretty Bird, Zoopreem, LaFeber's and Roudybush are available from many pet retail stores. You can purchase Harrison's Bird Diet through our hospital.

In order to ensure the diet conversion is going well, it is important to monitor your bird's weight each day first thing in the morning before breakfast. Purchase a scale that measures in grams. Sources for such a scale include discount department stores or mail order bird specialty stores such as Veterinary Specialty Products, Ltd.

Now, change your bird from the old, seed-based diet to the new, commercially formulated diet. At all times provide fresh beta-carotene (vitamin A) rich vegetables including yams/sweet potatoes, carrots, squash, red bell peppers, and dark green leafy vegetables to make up approximately 25% of the daily diet. Begin by mixing 20% new diet and 80% old seed diet for one week. Discard any uneaten food at the end of the day and do your best to provide only as much as your bird will eat each day. Weigh your bird each morning before breakfast, if s/he loses >5% of his/her body weight (5 grams per 100 grams body weight), then provide the old diet and call us for advice about how to proceed. In the second week, increase the new diet to 40% and decrease the old diet to 60%. As the new diet increases, your bird might be motivated to try the new diet, because s/he is likely to be hungry when the old diet is gone each day. On week three you will be feeding new diet 60% and old diet 40%, week four will be 80% new diet and 20% seed diet. Hold at this level; it is a good goal because seeds and nuts do provide important nutrients including essential fatty acids, which are generally not found in formulated pellets. Recommended nuts include walnuts and almonds. Recommended seeds include safflower and flax.

Other suggestions to help with the conversion are to sprinkle a small amount of seed on cooked sweet potato or yams. If your bird likes the yams then sprinkle the commercial formulated diet over them. You can also try cooking the commercial formulated diet into whole-grain muffins with walnuts and flax seeds.

If your bird does not begin to accept the new diet at the end of the above trial, please call us for other options. It is rare for any bird in the parrot family to not accept the available commercially formulated diets. The key is your commitment.