

CLIENT INFORMATION SHEET

NUTRITION FOR PASSERINES/PERCHING BIRDS

Why is the correct nutrition and diet so important for my new pet bird?

Malnutrition is responsible for a huge range of pet bird diseases. Correct nutrition therefore plays an important role in bird welfare, longevity and health.

Do you recommend seed or pellet based diets for my pet bird?



Firstly when considering bird nutrition it is important to remember that wild birds and pet birds have different energy requirements and so different nutritional needs. Wild birds have higher energy requirement compared to caged pet birds, as they spend 50% of the time flying, 30% playing and 20% preening. Wild birds will also supplement their diet with a larger range of seeds, fruit and bugs. Consequently seed based diets, which provide high energy, work well for wild birds.



However caged pet birds do not have the same high energy requirements as they spend less time flying and playing. Seed based diets are therefore not appropriate. Other disadvantages of seed based diets include:

- Nutritional quality of different seeds varies considerably.
- Pet birds may not consume all parts of the diet and of the seeds which are eaten may not by themselves provide appropriate nutrition.

Pet birds fed exclusively on seed based diets will go on to develop diseases including but not restricted to vitamin deficiencies, fatty liver disease, beak abnormalities, feather abnormalities, feather plucking etc.

My pet bird has been on a seed based diet for many years and has not developed any problems. Should I still consider changing to a pellet based feed?

Although some nutritional diseases can occur suddenly in birds, the majority of nutritional problems in pet birds are chronic. This means that it can be several years before they

develop abnormal clinical signs relating to nutritional abnormalities. Swapping over to a new diet can take time however. For more information on swapping diets in your pet bird please contact Stanhope Park Veterinary Hospital's Cat and Exotic branch to book an appointment.

What about fresh fruit and vegetables?

Appropriate FRESH fruit and vegetables may be given to your pet bird, but they should not make up over 20% of your birds dietary intake. The fresh food offered should not be kept in the enclosure for over 6-8 hours. If it has not been eaten within that time it should be removed.

What is UV light and does my pet bird require it?

Ultraviolet (UV) light is provided by direct sunlight and it is important as it allows your bird to produce vitamin D. Vitamin D is vital for bone growth, reproduction and normal metabolic function. UV light is blocked by glass therefore indoor birds with no time outdoors or very limited time outdoors should be provided with a UVB light source.

Does my pet bird need any additional supplements?

Birds being fed an appropriate diet generally do not require any other additional supplements, unless they are going through any periods of stress. For example if they have a concurrent illness, are growing birds or egg laying birds.