

DIETS FOR PARROTS

It is commonplace for captive birds to be fed a diet of just bird seed. Seed alone is very high in fat but low in vitamins, minerals and proteins. Problems associated with this diet include liver disease, feather and skin problems, obesity, respiratory disease and kidney disease.

In the wild, parrots forage for their own food and eat quite a varied diet which is what we want to create in our captive parrots diet. The first part of your parrots diet should be a good quality parrot pellet mix. There are a variety of sizes so it is important to choose the size pellet that suits your parrot. Parrots eat the whole pellets rather than cracking off the shell and throwing it away so there is less mess. Converting parrots to pellets can be difficult at first. To introduce pellets start by feeding half pellets and half seed. Make sure you only put out enough for one day as we want them to be hungry enough to investigate and eat the pellets. Gradually reduce the amount of seed. This may take several weeks. Pellets should make up 50% of your parrots diet and be given fresh daily.

Fruit and vegetables are the second important part of your parrots diet. They contain a variety of vitamins and minerals and are fun for them to eat. Some vegetables that parrots really like are peas, corn, broccoli, celery, capsicum, carrot and spinach. Avoid avocado, onion, garlic and rhubarb as these are very toxic. On hot days frozen vegetables are a particularly tasty treat and are easy to feed on a busy morning. Ensure vegetables and fruit are provided fresh and removed if not eaten so they don't spoil. Some fruits to try include orange, banana, kiwifruit, pear and melons. Parrots often like apple but it has minimal nutrient value.

Fresh grass is great for parrots and cheap! They are a natural source of nutrients and provide environmental enrichment. Seeding grasses and milk thistles are particular favourites just ensure they have not been sprayed with chemicals and wash with water before feeding. Flowers, leaves and branches from natives such as eucalypts, grevilleas and bottlebrushes are also great and make good perches too.

It is important to always have fresh water available for your parrot as well. They like to make a mess so it may need to be changed more than once daily. It is also a good idea to have a water bath big enough for them to swim in. They will not only be able to keep cool but it's also good for feather health.

Now what about treats I hear you ask?

For larger parrots such as Cockatoos and Alexandrines, tree nuts such as brazil and walnuts in their shells are great. They love cracking them open to get to the nut inside.

For smaller birds like Cockatiels, Quakers and Lovebirds, seeds and millet sprays make great treats. Seeds such as sunflower seeds are great for training but remember they are only a “sometimes” food. Since our parrots live in cages and aviaries, feeding time is really important. Hiding their food around their cages or using specially designed foraging toys are a great way to make feeding time fun. Vegetables can also be frozen or hidden in shredded paper in boxes. **Diet is really important for parrots.**

Converting captive birds to eat pellets is often difficult but patience is the key and its certainly worth it in the end. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact us on 53811996.