

**A quick note about dietary protein: most pet birds are herbivores or granivores.** Their digestive system is very efficient at extracting amino acids and proteins from plant materials. Overloading with protein, especially animal protein, will lead to severe kidney dysfunction, gout, calcium/phosphorus imbalance, reproductive disorders, feather-picking, and death. Pet birds should be offered a minimum amount of legumes (never give tofu), sprouts, or other high-protein plant material.

Grit is not necessary for birds, and will cause digestive problems, toxicity and death. The best source of minerals and vitamins are leafy greens.

**Never allow a bird to eat from your mouth. The natural bacteria in a bird's mouth and a human's mouth differ, and human bacteria are always pathogenic to birds.**

## Dietary Suggestions For Pet Birds, Including Parrots, Finches and Canaries

### STEAMED BROWN RICE

**PELLETS** (these are expensive so use a measuring cup) Conures and larger: ¼ cup coarse per bird daily; smaller birds: 1/8 cup fine daily. Disperse in multiple feeding cups.

**SEED CAKES** Conures and larger: 2 cubes per bird daily; Small birds: 1 cube daily, smush it slightly.

**VEGETABLES** Entire leaves of green poked through the cage wires or on branches; corn wheels; cooked yams or squash; whole carrots, tops included; half of apple and whole (opened but not peeled) banana poked on sticks (in the aviaries); grapes, citrus, pomegranate, persimmon, etc. One small slice per bird. Put on twigs, etc.

**TREATS** 1 nut per large bird; or 1 inch cube good bread; or other nutritious treat. If using a “**Bird Bread**”, ☆ smaller birds should be given only a ½ cube daily. Disperse cubes in branches, or even hand individual birds their cubes. Other treats: air-popped popcorn – unsalted and unflavored; unsalted, baked crackers; plain rice cakes. (Note: *Never give “fortified” items with extra vitamins or minerals, especially human foods that have additional zinc, such as breakfast cereal. Some human enriched-products have zinc levels that can be toxic to pet birds.*)

Searching the web results in literally hundreds of homemade recipes for nutritious bird foods! Here's a suggested recipe ☆ for “**Mama's Bird Bread**” from [www.cockatielcottage.net](http://www.cockatielcottage.net)

#### Ingredients

1 box Jiffy Corn Muffin Mix  
3 tablespoons cornmeal  
1 tablespoon smooth peanut butter  
1 small jar baby food-sweet potatoes  
3 eggs  
½ cup apple juice  
2 egg shells *finely ground* to powder

#### Directions

Prepare muffin mix as directed on package. Add the two additional eggs and all the remaining ingredients. Mix well until peanut butter is dissolved. Pour into a greased 8” x 8” square pan. Bake at 325° for 25–30 minutes. Cool and cut into 1 inch squares. Recommend wrapping rows of pieces in plastic wrap and all rows stored in a larger bag. Defrost pieces as needed.



## Forever Wild Avian Sanctuary

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## Guidelines To Keep Your Newly Adopted Bird Happy and Healthy

*Thank you for providing a permanent home to a bird adopted from the Forever Wild Avian Sanctuary! Our guidelines cover a wide range of topics to help in settling your new companion bird into its new home. Questions? Call us!*

### Daily Maintenance

Food and water dishes should be cleaned and changed daily. Keep one set cleaned, while the other is in use.

Fresh, perishable food should be placed in separate food bowls. Remove fresh food from the cage after a couple of hours to avoid spoilage.

Change cage papers daily (or more often if needed).

Clean food debris or droppings from toys and perches as needed (which can be as often as once a day).

### Hazards

Birds are particularly sensitive to airborne fumes and smoke. Remove birds from premises for at least seven days to spray chemicals or when painting or laying carpeting. Avoid fumes from the following: cigarette smoke; dryer fabric softener sheets; scented detergents; carpet fresheners; scented candles; perfumes and colognes; new paint; fireplace smoke; termite fumigation; art supplies, such as fixatives or pigments; aerosol sprays of any type; hair-spray; cleaning solutions; new carpeting; air fresheners; window cleaners and other household cleaning products; and Teflon® coated cookware when heated.

# Guidelines To Keep Your Newly Adopted Bird Happy and Healthy

## Cages

Having a nice place to live is important for your companion bird. A well-designed and well-maintained cage sets the stage for a healthy environment and makes cleanup easier. You may want to consider one cage for daytime use and one sleeping cage at night in a quiet, darkened room.

- When choosing a cage, they should be longer than they are tall, because birds fly from side to side, not up and down. Canaries and finches particularly like to fly back and forth from perch to perch.
- Make sure the bar spacing is the appropriate width so your bird cannot squeeze its head between the bars to cause serious injury or even death. With larger birds, it is important for the bars to be strong enough so that they cannot bend them with their beaks.
- Avoid cages made with galvanized metal (chicken wire, hardware cloth) which cause zinc or lead poisoning. Decorative cages made of wicker or basket materials cannot be sanitized properly and parrots, in particular, can chew out of them easily and escape.
- Line the cage bottom with sheets of papers (newspaper, butcher paper or computer paper) and remove individual layers daily (or more frequently, if needed). Look at the bird's droppings when cleaning the cage to make sure they are normal!
- If grates are used, change paper layers daily AND CLEAN THE GRATE AS WELL.
- DO NOT use corncob bedding, walnut shells, etc. Birds can ingest these, resulting in impaction. They are highly toxic, and have heavy loads of bacterial and fungal spores.

## Perches

Rope perches or natural branches are best for perches. Most birds will enjoy chewing on fresh branches, especially if the outer bark has not dried. It is good exercise for their beaks and provides enrichment. Eucalyptus, thornless palo verde, pecan and most hardwoods are acceptable. Do not use conifers (pine) or other resinous trees.

- Select a size appropriate for your bird. Their nails should reach about half around the perch, but never all the way around. Inappropriate perches can hurt the feet.
- When positioning perches, be sure that droppings will not fall into food and water dishes. Make sure they are placed in a comfortable location for your bird to perch high, but allow them to be able to get to their food and water dishes.

## Daily Observations To Keep Your Bird Healthy

Keeping your feathered friend healthy requires that you watch out for any problems and any changes from normal. Be alert for any discharges, including those from nostrils, eyes, and beak. Monitor the appearance of the droppings for changes in color or consistency. The vent should be clean with no matting of the feathers. The bottom of the feet should not have any wear points or sores. Watch for changes in the amount of food and water consumed. Observe the rate, rhythm and depth of several respirations. *If you observe any changes, consult your avian veterinarian immediately.*

## Bathing

You may spray your birds in its cage or at the sink. A plant mister-type sprayer filled with plain, fresh water works well. It is very likely that your feathered friend will react by spreading its wings out, and opening all its feathers to catch the droplets.

Some owners enjoy having their birds join them in their shower. Special perches and gadgets can be used or you can put them up on the shower bar after bathing. However, caution should be used to make sure that the bird only comes in contact with water and *not* with soaps or shampoos.

A shallow bowl of water may also be offered for bathing. Make sure it is heavy enough to not tip over when the bird perches on it. Some birds prefer a large kale leaf filled with water.

Bathing keeps feathers glossy, skin healthy, encourages birds to preen and keeps the epithelium of their sinuses moist. It is especially good for birds to bathe on hot days and in warm environments.

## Major Stressors

**Lack of Sleep.** Birds need 10-12 hours of quiet sleep in a dark room nightly.

**Overcrowding.** If the birds are fighting, picking each others' feathers or falling ill, there could be too many. Reduce the number of birds if these conditions are present.

**Being Hunted.** A bird is stressed if subjected to constant observation (staring). Companion birds are sensitive to extended periods of a watchful gaze by humans, cats or dogs. They may also panic when a hawk flies by, especially if their cage sits directly in front of a window. Large objects like balloons or aircraft can have the same frightening affect.

**Dirty Environment.** Birds are susceptible to molds and bacteria. Maintain a clean cage and cage items in a clean room.

**Over Stimulation.** Birds need some "down time" to nap and preen. They shouldn't live in the busiest hallway or room all of the time. A sleeping cage in a quiet room may be helpful.

## Dietary Notes:

### *You really mean no seeds?*

To keep our companion birds healthy, we have to remember their natural history and wild heritage. There is no possibility of providing complete natural foods, exercise, biodiversity and weather conditions in a captive situation. So we, as caretakers, have to be responsible for compensating the dietary needs of our avian friends.

*Variety is important!*

*Seeds as a sole diet are deficient in essential amino acids, calcium and vitamins.* Reduced levels of vitamin A, a common problem in all-seed diets, alter the immune system and make a bird susceptible to severe bacterial, viral or fungal infections.

To alleviate the problem, you can feed your companion bird vegetables and pellets. Vegetables high in vitamin A include carrots, sweet potatoes, yams, dark leafy greens, and winter squash.

The exact requirements for all species of companion birds are not known. People working with different groups of birds have recognized that some species have different nutritional needs. For example, Quakers and Amazon parrots should have diets lower in fat and cholesterol; African Grey parrots and conures have special calcium needs; and macaws require a higher concentration of fatty acids as found in certain nuts (almonds, macadamia nuts, walnuts and pecans).