

Feeding

- Most birds eat one of three things—seed, fruit, and/or nectar



Seed

- The vast majority of birds have a diet of seed
 - Cereal seeds—higher content of carbohydrates compared to oil
 - Canary seed, millet, corn, dehusked oat kernals
 - Oil seeds—higher in fat content than cereal seed and lower in carbohydrates
 - Sunflower, peanuts, safflower, pine nuts, rape, maw niger, linseed

Seed

- Usually bought in a commercial premixed ration of cereal and oil seed that is formulated for certain bird species and provides balance and variety
 - Should be dry and free of dust and dirt
 - Moldy seed should never be fed (peanuts are very susceptible)

Seed

- May be soaked in warm water for 24 hours for young birds who may have difficulty cracking the seed with their beak or for birds during the breeding and molting season

Soaked Seeds

- Soaking stimulates germination which causes a chemical change that increases the protein content of the seeds.
- Before feeding, rinse in tap water and examine for mold or fungi
- Discard any soaked seeds not consumed within a few hours and clean containers before feeding more soaked seeds

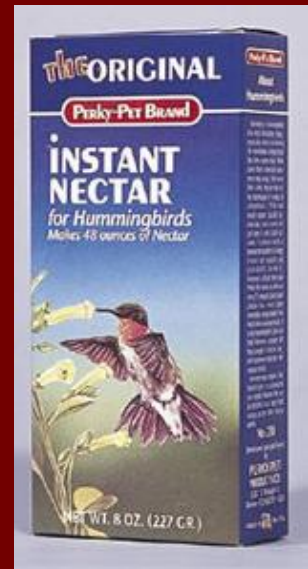
Fruit

- Consumed by Mynah, lories, and lorikeets
- Diet does not include seeds, grit, and cuttlefish
- Soft bill pellets or foods from the pet store
- Fruit—apple slices, grapes, orange slices, and banana or dried fruit can be fed
- Mealworms are live food that can be fed also



Nectar

- Nectar and pollen are consumed by lorries and lorikeets
- Powdered nectar is available from a pet store to mix with water



Other Feed Options

- Green plant material
- Carrot tops, chickweed, dandelion leaves
- Kale and spinach in moderation (too much green can cause diarrhea)
- Avoid lettuce because it lacks nutritional value
- Wash to remove any pesticide residue
- Feed after it has warmed to room temperature

Other Feed Options

- Grit aids in the ventriculus in grinding food up since birds have no teeth
 - Soluble-oyster shell breaks down and is a source of minerals
 - Insoluble-crushed granite provides the base for food to rub and work against to be ground up

Other Feed Options

- Cuttlefish bone (marine mollusk)
- Provides a source of calcium and will readily be eaten by larger birds
- Smaller birds may need cuttlefish shaved or chipped
- Particularly useful to female birds who need calcium for egg production



Handling and Training

- Allow birds to adjust to new locations for 2 to 3 days before any handling is attempted.
- Offer a treat at regular intervals until it will take the treat through an open door cage
- Press a stick perch up against the bird's chest above the legs to encourage the bird to step up on it

Handling and Training

- Once the bird is comfortable one may substitute a finger or hand for the bird to perch on
- Leather gloves may be needed for larger birds that use their beak to climb to perch



Clipping Wings

- Wings can be clipped to restrict their ability to fly and prevent escape
- Painless
- Primary and secondary flight feathers are cut just above the base of the feather shaft
- Cutting into the feather shaft will result in injury and bleeding

Clipping Wings

- The two outer primary flight feathers are left for aesthetic purposes



Teaching to Talk

- Budgerigars, cockatiels, parrots, macaws and cockatoos can be taught to talk
- Young males are usually the best learners and easiest to teach
- Remove distractions such as mirrors, toys, and feed during lessons
- The same person needs to work with a bird on a regular basis. Usually women and children are better trainers.

Teaching to Talk

- Lessons should be given at the same time everyday.
- Limit the length to about 15 minutes each day
- Use short phrases and words and slowly repeat them

Competency 20.00

Use principles of bird management to create a healthy habitat for pet birds.

Objective 20.01

- Discuss the major diseases and ailments of birds.

Internal Parasites

- Rarely a problem with birds, however some are possible
 - Roundworms
 - Tapeworms

Roundworms

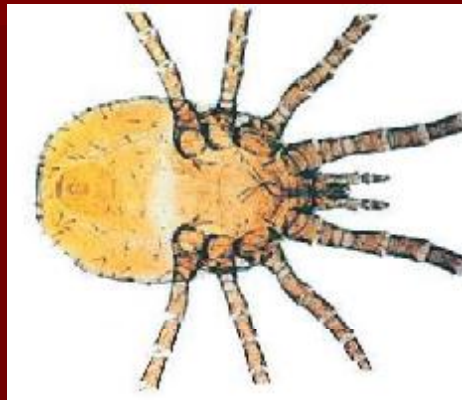
- Contracted from ingesting worm eggs in contaminated feces, soil, or food.
- Diagnosis is by observing feces for long, thin, white worms
- Symptoms: blockage of the intestines, poor plumage, weight loss, diarrhea
- Several treatments are available

Tapeworms

- Contracted by eating an intermediate host such as houseflies, fleas, ticks or earthworms
- Diagnosed by observing small, rice-like segments in the feces
- Proper cleaning and sanitation practices are best prevention
- Treatment is with piperazine, nicotine sulfate and kamal powder

External Parasites

- Red Mites
- Feather Mites
- Scaly leg mites



Red Mite



Feather Mite



Damage from Scaly Leg Mite

Red Mites

- Appear as tiny red specks and feed on blood of infected birds at night
- Causes restlessness, scratching, and picking at feathers
- Spread through contact with infected birds
- Adults may be dusted with a pyrethium powder
- Clean and disinfect all cages and nest boxes

Feather Mites

- Cause a bird to chew or pick its feathers
- If feathers look chewed, or feathers are lost, look for small, gray-colored moving specks
- Feed both night and day



Feather Mites

- Symptoms: restlessness, severe scratching, feather picking, skin irritation
- Cages and equipment should be treated with nicotine sulfate, malathion, or coumaphos
- Birds should be sprayed with mite spray

Scaly Leg Mites

- Mites that tunnel under the scales on the legs of budgies, lovebirds, and canaries.
- Have their entire life cycle on the bird
- Symptoms: White scaly deposits that become thickened, enlarged, and encrusted



Scaly Leg Mites

■ Treatment

- Use Vaseline or mineral oil to kill the mites and loosen the deposits
- This also plugs the air holes used by the mites and causes them to suffocate
- Additional treatment is by cleaning cages, perches, and equipment

Bacterial Diseases-Parrot Fever

- Also known as chlamydiosis or psittacosis
- Affects the liver and spleen
- Contracted mainly through feces and contaminated food and water
- Symptoms: nasal discharges, listlessness, appetite loss, weight loss, greenish-colored bacteria, labored breathing

Bacterial Diseases-Parrot Fever

- Treatment: birds should eat chlortetracycline-impregnated seed for at least 21 days
- Psittacosis can be transmitted to humans

Bacterial Diseases-Bumblefoot

- A painful ailment associated with staphylococcal infections
- Symptoms: feet and joints become hot and swollen with a thick, grayish white fluid, and not walking or clasping onto the perch
- Prevention: suitable perches and sanitation
- Treatment: Antibiotics

Bacterial Diseases-Bumblefoot

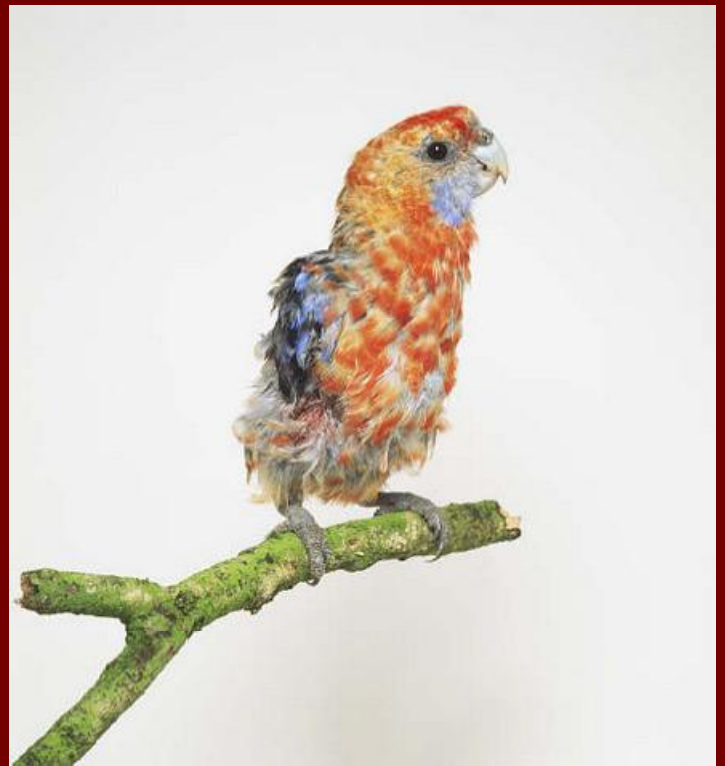


Viral Disease-French Molt

- Also known as Psittacine beak and feather disease
- Attacks the immune system
- Bird's beak and nails may be soft, overgrown, and lose their pigment
- Symptoms become evident at the first molt when new feathers do not emerge or are deformed and break off

Viral Disease-French Molt

- Treatment is with vitamins, minerals, and control of secondary diseases through sanitation
- There is no cure for this disease



Viral Disease-Newcastle

- Respiratory difficulty (wheezing) is one of the first symptoms, followed by tremors, wing droop, and a twisted neck.
- Imported birds are the main source of possible infections
- Spreads rapidly with a high mortality rate
- Should be vaccinated to prevent the disease

Nutritional Problems-Goiter

- Swelling of the thyroid glands in the neck and interference with breathing
- Major cause is iodine deficiency
- Seems to be a special problem for Budgerigars

Nutritional Problems-Rickets

- Osteomalacia
- An imbalance or deficient amount of calcium, phosphorus, or Vitamin D3 that causes deterioration or softening of the bones
- Symptoms: lameness, stiff-legged gait, constant resting in the squatting position and decreased growth

Nutritional Problems-Rickets

- Treatment: Prevention is best through adequate oyster shell or coarse limestone in the diet along with vitamin D3 supplementation

Nutritional Problems-Obesity

- Too much food, not enough activity, or seeds high in fat
- Bird owners need to avoid feeding too many sunflower seed if obesity is a problem for their bird.



Other Problems-Overgrown Claws

- Can result in injury if they become entangled in the cage
- May be clipped with pet nail clippers
- Care should be taken to avoid the pinkish streak in the center of the claw (blood vessel)



Other Problems-Feather Plucking

- Due to boredom, bad diet, lack of bathing, or bird is in need of a mate
- Birds living indoors need regular bathing or spraying to encourage preening and avoid feather plucking.
- Preening is the process that a bird goes through in cleaning and trimming its feathers with its beak.

Bathing

- Regular bathing and spraying reduces feather dust and dirt and cuts down on mites



Bathing

- Small birds (budgerigars, canaries, finches, mynah birds, lories, cockatiels) prefer to bathe in a container.
- A container may be placed in the cage at regular intervals for 30 minute time periods

Bathing

- Larger birds need to be sprayed with a fine mist from a plant sprayer.
- The mist should be allowed to filter down onto the bird rather than being sprayed directly on the animal.
- The bird does not need to be saturated, but gently sprayed 2 or 3 times per week.

Symptoms of Problems

- Sleeping on two legs may indicate the bird is uncomfortable or ailing. Birds normally sleep on only one leg.
- A bird who fluffs its feathers out is usually chilled and trying to obtain body heat.
- If feces is runny, a digestive ailment may be the problem.
- Not flying around and lack of activity may indicate sickness.

Symptoms of Problems

- Eye discharges or continually closed eyes are an indication of cold, etc.
- Wheezing, noisy, or irregular breathing may be a sign of a respiratory problem.
- Not eating or very little eating indicates a loss of appetite that is often associated with illness.

Prevention of Illness

- Select a healthy bird.
- Place bird in a dry, warm, draft-free place
- Subject the bird to little stress
- No other animals should be around
- Quarantine and observation period of at least 3-4 weeks before introducing to other birds.

Prevention of Illness

- Sanitation is extremely important—should provide fresh food and water.
- Keep perches and cages clean.



Bird Cage Vacuum

At the First Signs of Illness

- Cage temperature should be maintained between 85-90 degrees F
 - Move the cage to a warmer location if needed
 - Adjust the temperature of the cage with a light bulb near the cage or a heating pad under the cage

At the First Signs of Illness

- Provide 2 to 3 perches so that the bird can find the most comfortable temperature
- Partially cover the cage to prevent drafts
- Provide quick energy fluids like sugar water, honey water, or orange juice.

