



Royal Animal Hospital – How should I feed my parrot?

Seed mixes are totally inadequate. Sunflower seeds and peanuts usually cause chronic health problems including Vitamin A deficiency. This can eventually cause respiratory disease, beak, and claw problems, poor plumage, poor skin on feet, runny nose, and swollen eyes. Parrots on a poor diet often also suffer from calcium deficiency. The birds become quiet and inactive with drooping wings culminating eventually in seizures. This is particularly common among birds kept indoors with no access to sunlight.



Loose pet shop seed is usually of very poor quality and should never be fed to parrots. All seed-only mixes are inadequate as a complete food, so if you are feeding a seed mix you should change to a complete proprietary brand such as Harrison's Bird Diet

You should get advice from a specialist avian vet if your bird has been on the wrong diet. It will be necessary to take a blood sample to determine calcium levels. Ask the vet to check at the same time for zinc levels. Discuss changing to a complete pellet food. There are also seasonal foods and special breeding, hand rearing and weaning foods.

Change over from the old seed to the new food slowly. Feed nine tenths old mix with one tenth new mix, and add one tenth more seed mix each week ten weeks changeover. Don't let the parrot just pick out some of the seeds. It's not always easy to change birds over from seed to complete food or even to a new mix. You cannot starve a bird into eating it will die if it fails to feed at least twice a day.

Here are some different methods that you can try:

- Mix a little of the new food with the old food, and when you see your bird eating some of the new food, increase the proportion.
- If you are trying a complete pelleted food, moisten it with water or fruit juice, and add some of the old seed. While the bird is picking out the seed it will get a taste of the complete food. Decrease the liquid generally until you are feeding only the dry complete diet. If you are using this method, the damp food should be removed from the cage every 4-6 hours.
- Eating is a social activity in parrots. If your bird is trained in basic obedience, you can encourage it to eat new foods by getting it to copy you. In this situation, you should eat (or pretend to eat) the new foods yourself in front of the bird. This is best done, initially, out of sight of the cage.