

SCENIC BIRD FOOD

What About Protein (For Psittacines)?

WHITE PAPER

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Over the years many have misunderstood the role of protein in a quality psittacine food. Bird handlers, bird breeders, magazine editors, store owners, even avian veterinarians have at times made misleading, and probably unknowing, naive, and harmful statements in regards to this subject.

In order to shed light on it, one should consider that lay knowledge of complex nutritional and metabolic systems in animals usually leads to the loudest voice in the din being heard the most. Unfortunately those with expert knowledge don't always care to get into these shouting matches. If that weren't enough, some so-called experts, with or without a few initials after their name can often persuade the casual observer to their own opinion having stated it as fact.

So let us look at some real scientific research and interview those who are experts in the field to see what their conclusions are.

FACT: Scientific studies clearly show that protein requirements of normal psittacines for early growth and for adults that feed their young are over 20%. There should be no question asked! It is in the literature and anyone can read and understand it if they want to know the truth.

FACT: Scientific studies clearly show that protein levels of over 20% are not harmful to the liver and kidneys of normal adult birds and do not induce gout in normal adult birds. Neither does it "overwork" the renal system of normal adult birds. In fact, no one has ever induced harmful gout in any normal bird by feeding it protein levels of over 50 %.

Scientific studies on cockatiels failed to produce gout at protein levels above 20 %. In fact the healthiest cockatiels were fed protein levels of 35 %.

In another study with chickens that had known susceptibilities to gout, protein levels of 80% were required to produce symptoms of gout and none was produced below 80 %. Third, in a normal line of chickens gout was not produced at either 20 or 80 % protein levels.

In the most revealing study, normal chickens fed a range of protein up to 40 % had their plasma uric acid levels measured six hours later. They increased modestly from 6 – 12 mg/dl. However, after a 72-hour fast, their same plasma uric acid levels rose dramatically to over 10 times the above range. After a 240 hours, these same plasma uric acid levels were over 40 times the above ranges. **HOWEVER, WHEN THESE SAME BIRDS WERE RE-FED THE 20 % PROTEIN LEVEL FOOD, THEIR PLASMA URIC ACID LEVELS FELL TO NORMAL.**

Obviously, there is nothing harmful about feeding a bird at any stage of its life a 20 % protein level food. In fact, a balanced diet of quality 20 % protein maintains normal and healthy blood uric acid levels. In addition, it provides the additional benefits of disease resistance, healthier molts, and prevention of dietary dilution from adding unformulated foods to the food cup. (See **What About Miracle Foods**).