

SCENIC BIRD FOOD

THE TRUTH ABOUT SEEDS

WHITE PAPER
March 25, 2004

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

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. In other words, DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ and DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU HEAR.

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 feeding seed based diets to your bird is ill advised. Seeds are not a balanced and complete diet for any bird.

The fact that so many caged birds are still fed a primary diet of seeds is proof enough that grossly incorrect information and horribly biased opinions are still prevalent.

Some still believe that most psittacines are seed eaters. This is wrong. Most psittacines are omnivores.

1. Some still believe that anything their bird eats or "enjoys" is good for them. This is wrong. Scientific studies show that birds do not possess nutritional wisdom even in the wild. These studies show that birds can, and do, ignore healthy foods available to them that are easier to find and eat than the less nutritious foods they consume on a daily basis.
2. Some believe that because a pet store sells seeds and other food items, they must be good for the bird. This is wrong. Pet stores are in business to make money! Those that aren't usually go out of business.
3. Some still believe that birds that eat seeds in captivity are mimicking normal feeding behavior. This is wrong. Scientific studies show that birds in the wild eat over eighty (80) species of plants in addition to insects, fish, carrion, and seeds.
4. Some believe seeds cost less than an appropriately formulated manufactured diet. They are not. Much of seed cost is wasted shell, which is discarded by birds. This waste and the cost of adding vitamins and minerals to balance the inadequacies of seed nutrients adds three times the cost of a premium mix of seeds. Multiply the cost of seeds by 3 to get the true cost of seed consumed by birds.

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5. Some even believe that because some birds eat some seeds in the wild, that seeds are a necessary component of a birds feeding regimen. This is wrong. Scientific studies show that most of the seeds consumed in the wild by psittacines are not available in North America. NOT EVEN CORN! It is a fact that the varieties of corn available in North American and in fields outside this continent vary remarkably in important nutrients. Corn varieties vary so much that even when grown here they vary in selenium concentration by over 2,000 % (0.01 to 2.03 ppm).

FACT: Scientific studies show that seed mix available for birds contain the following excesses and deficiencies: lysine, fat, calcium, available phosphorus, sodium, manganese, zinc, iron, iodine, selenium, vitamins A, D, E, and K, riboflavin, pantothenic acid, available niacin, vitamin B-12, choline, and Omega-3.

A hit and miss approach to providing your pet with quality nutrition is impossible. Veterinarians concern themselves with the relationships between 20 diseases and over 40 nutritional deficiencies to properly treat your bird.

The scientific probability that an individual pet owner can compensate and balance these excesses and deficiencies using vitamin and mineral additives, soak and cook foods, birdie breads, snacks, fruits and vegetables, and seeds cannot be calculated. Even if one begins from scratch, the chances are less than one in 4 billion you will get it right. (See "Miracle Foods").