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Changing a Bird's Diet from Seed to Pellets

It is very difficult to switch a bird from seed to pellets. Birds are creatures of habit and they can become very upset by changes in diet if they have only been on a seed diet their entire life. Many times this process will take up to six months. A two-day cycle is the easiest way to modify the diet. This cycle is listed below.

- 36 hours (1 ½ days) – Feed only pellets; we recommend Harrison's Bird Foods since it is an organic diet. If the bird does not eat the pellets, they should be thrown away and replaced with fresh pellets daily.
- 12 hours (1/2 day) – Feed a mixture of pellets with seed; you may also offer human food during these 12 hours. This 12 hour period every other day is important so that birds do not starve themselves if they are not eating pellets.

The two-day cycle is continued until the bird is eating pellets on a regular basis. At that time, human food and limited seed may be offered daily. Some tricks to get birds to eat the pelleted food are as follows:

- Feed colored pellets. Some birds prefer the bright colors to the plain brown. Zupreem is a brand with colored pellets that contains good nutrition, though it is not organic.
- Place a small amount of fruit juice on the pellets. Apple juice, grapefruit juice, and orange juice are some favorite choices.
- Try different brands of pellets. Not all pellets are flavored the same.
- Mix a small amount of peanut butter with the pellets.
- Mix pellets with homemade bread or muffin mix, and then bake. Corn muffins are great to mix with pellets prior to baking. The milk products in the mix should be replaced with applesauce.
- Crush pellets and mix them with a little water and seed
- Place hot sauce (Tabasco) on the pellets. Some birds like it hot!
- Pretend to eat the pellets in front of your bird. Birds will often try the pellets if they see a human or another bird eating the pellets.

It is important to be persistent. Owners usually give up before the birds even try the pellets. We realize that this diet change does take time and patience, but it is necessary for your bird's optimal health. Seeds are fatty and do not provide a bird the proper nutrition. However, if your bird is losing more than 5% of its body weight in the first week, add an extremely small amount of seed nightly. Please feel free to call if you have any questions regarding the diet change and the health of your bird.

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