



Feeding Your Pet Bird



PETVET clinics are well-equipped, full-service, small animal veterinary practices providing comprehensive diagnostic, medical, surgical and dental care. We aim to offer quality service, giving your pet the maximum opportunity to lead a long and happy life.

ALL THE CARE YOUR PET NEEDS!



Budgies and Cockatiels are the most frequent caged birds we see at PETVET. Both species are intelligent, outgoing, hardy, easy to care for and relatively inexpensive to buy – so it's not surprising that they are so popular.

Nutritional Diseases

Research over the last two decades has expanded greatly our knowledge about the nutritional needs of these birds. Unfortunately, this information has been slow to filter through to bird breeders and pet shops. Novice pet bird owners, with the best of intentions, typically buy a bird that has been weaned onto seed mix and are told that all the bird needs is seed mix, grit (which generally is not needed) and cuttle-bone (which is often ignored). As a result, diseases caused by improper nutrition are the most common problems we see in pet birds. And it can be quite a challenge to switch an adult bird to a better diet once it is set in its ways.

Seed mixes are deficient in the minerals calcium and iodine and vitamins A, D, E and K. They also provide excessive levels of fat especially if the bird is confined to a cage and gets very little exercise. Even if the bird is offered fruit and vegetables to supplement its seed-based diet, it is unlikely to eat enough fresh food to make up for the deficiencies in its seed diet.

Obesity in Pet Birds

As a consequence, we often see obese Budgies, due to their high fat diet, with a goiter due to iodine deficiency. Pressure on the trachea (windpipe) by the enlarged thyroid gland causes squeaking and laboured respiration. Overgrowth of the tissue surrounding the nostrils (Brown Cere Hypertrophy) can result when a female Budgie produces too much oestrogen in response to her high fat diet. This can progress to the point where the nostrils become completely blocked. Malnutrition can also lead to abnormal development of the cells lining the airways and a compromised immune system function. This has led to severe sinusitis in Cockatiels.

Female pet Cockatiels will often lay excessive numbers of eggs, even when they do not have a mate or a nest box. This compounds nutritional problems by further depleting their calcium stores, increasing the risk of life-threatening egg binding and egg peritonitis. The same principles apply to larger parrots such as Galahs and Cockatoos. But because these birds are sometimes hand-reared on improper diets, their problems can be more severe. When x-raying these birds we often find bowed limbs and deformed spines as a result of metabolic bone disease during growth.

Recommended Diets

Good quality formulated diets, designed to supply all of the bird's nutritional requirements, are available. Harrison's Bird Diets and Kaytee Exact are stocked at PETVET clinics and we can order other brands such as Wombaroo when required for particular individuals. Improved nutrition is commonly part of the treatment plan for our bird patients. Young birds reared on good diets continued through out life can avoid many preventable health problems.

CLINIC LOCATIONS

PETVET Lower Hutt
70 Pharazyn Street, Melling
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