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**A GUIDE ON CONVERTING YOUR
BIRD TO THE BEST DIET**

Ensure that your pet bird is in good health. Changing a bird's diet can be stressful, even if changing the diet will help his condition. Since birds are masters at hiding their illnesses, the stress incurred during a diet change can catapult the bird into a worse condition. There are many methods to convert parrots to a new diet.

The success of one method over the other depends on the number of birds, the compliance level of the owner, and most importantly, the consistency of the caretaker. Usually, a diet change is necessary to prevent malnutrition in parrots, and a veterinarian usually plays an instrumental part in a bird's diet change. Here are some suggestions to get your birds on a healthier diet!



Every Day Method

A simple and safe way to convert most pets to a better diet is to start by cleaning the cage each evening, and leaving ONLY Tropicana in the feeders (you may sprinkle some on the floor or place a small dish on the floor as well). The following day (usually mid morning to start with), add some of the bird's regular food on top of the Tropicana. Birds that like fruits and vegetables should have the dry Tropicana sprinkled right in with their favorite items such as oranges and fresh cut corn. Some birds will start on this moistened form more easily. Sprinkling seed kernel such as shelled sunflower on Tropicana will also help some parrots get the idea (i.e. you don't have to hull all foods!).

Every evening, all of the remaining food should be removed and replaced with fresh Tropicana. Seed may be added later on the following day. (As long as seed is provided sooner or later each day, safety is maintained.)

Most birds are powerfully motivated to search for food each morning and sample Tropicana within a few days. You can tell when your pet is eating the new food as their droppings will become a paler color and Tropicana will usually be found in the water dish.

Once your pet is eating the Tropicana well, keep seed OUT of the cage. Seed can still be given of course, but as a treat fed by hand. Feeding high water content items such as oranges, fresh corn, green peppers, spinach, broccoli, and berries will not unbalance the Tropicana diet significantly as the majority of calories will still be taken in from Tropicana.

Your bird is sure to enjoy an improvement in feather quality and overall health on such a modern diet. Just ask your pet retailer or avian veterinarian!



Every Other Day Method

Since birds are creatures of habit, they will usually look to their dish for their favorite foods. The owner should place only the new diet, Tropicana, in that very dish. In a separate dish, on alternate days, offer the old diet. Always keep Tropicana in the bird's regular food dish. Once the bird is accustomed to the Tropicana and the owner can observe the bird consuming the Tropicana, the old diet can then be given every two days, then every three days and so on. This method of conversion usually takes about two weeks. If the attempt to convert a bird to Tropicana fails, continue with the old diet for two weeks, then repeat the "Every Other Day" method. Even the most resistant bird usually converts after the second attempt. The main thing to remember with this method is to never mix the seeds with the Tropicana. This promotes picky eating. Once the bird is successfully converted, then the old diet, most commonly a seed mixture, can be offered as a treat or as an incentive for behavior modification.



Flock Conversion Method



This method of diet conversion plays into the natural instinct of a flock of birds' desire to survive. A "flock" can be an entire aviary or it can consist of a multiple bird household. Parrots in the wild will eat together. If one bird finds food, he usually calls out to the others and they share food. If a bird chooses not to eat in this situation, he is usually sick and will not survive. While our domestic pets may be a generation or two removed from this actual behavior, the instinct is still there. Pets or breeders do not have to see each other eat, but they should know that others in the "flock" are eating and they will all soon eat. The caretaker should feed Tropicana to everyone in the "flock" at the same time. Offer only Tropicana. Out of curiosity, one or two members of the "flock" will pick at the new food while others may show some resistance. In most cases, the ones who start eating it will send vocal signs of eating, and the others will follow. The "Every Other Day Method" can also be used with this method of conversion. The caretaker needs to observe the resistant members for signs of starvation. In an aviary situation, this might be a bit more challenging depending on how the birds are housed.

TropiMix Method



For birds that are resistant to other conversion methods, try moistened TropiMix (1 part TropiMix to equal part hot water). The hot water softens the fruit, corn, legumes, and most importantly, softens the Tropicana morsels in the TropiMix. The softened Tropicana coats your bird's favorite seeds with the nutty Tropicana flavor, therefore the bird becomes better accustomed to the flavor. Since all of the nuts and seeds in TropiMix are already hulled, this can help break the bird's habit of hulling seeds. Be sure to remove moistened food from your bird's cage after one hour. As your bird eats more of this mix, add a higher ratio of Tropicana to TropiMix for ultimate nutrition! For conversion recipes using TropiMix, visit hari.ca/blog/recipes-for-birds.

Enrich and Forage

This method plays into the instincts of most parrot species and can even be used in combination with Flock Conversion Method. Place a morsel of Tropicana, dependent on the size, in an appropriately sized foraging toy, such as a puzzle box. Most parrots' natural curiosity takes over!

Keep in mind that not all species forage in the same manner. Cockatiels and African Greys, for instance, are ground foragers. If such is the case, have a table top tray with various items that are bird safe — toy pieces, appropriate sized stones, etc. — and sprinkle Tropicana amongst them. As your bird investigates the items on the tray, he'll soon find something edible — the Tropicana! Often when our parrots work at getting their dinner, they embrace that morsel even more!

Tropicana: Nutrition to last a lifetime



For more information on diet conversion, please visit the Feeding and Nutrition section on the HARI website, www.hari.ca