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FEEDING TOUCANS AND TOUCANETTES

General Information

Our knowledge of bird nutrition is constantly evolving. This is due to heightened awareness of the importance of nutrition plus increased research. As with all other animals, birds need a proper balance of carbohydrates, proteins, fat, vitamins, minerals and water. Toucans and Toucanettes have a high moisture diet and a relatively short digestive tract, which make for a very quick transit time. This means your Toucan or Toucanette will eat a LOT and likely have frequent and often very loose projectile droppings. It is NOT uncommon to have blue droppings 15-20 minutes after eating blueberries!



Should I be concerned about what my Toucans or Toucanettes eats?

Nutrition is commonly neglected with pet birds. Too often owners assume they are feeding a proper diet to their Toucans or Toucanettes when in fact they are not. This is a common reason for many health problems. Hemochromatosis or iron storage disease has long been suspected to be related to high dietary iron. It is important to continually strive to improve your bird's diet. This involves constantly educating yourself and a certain degree of **common sense**. It is not sufficient to feed a Toucan or Toucanette just to maintain life; instead, your goal should be to help it thrive and flourish. Your bird's health depends on how well it is fed.

- Discuss nutrition with your veterinarian!

What does my Toucans or Toucanettes naturally eat?

Toucans and Toucanettes are omnivorous. That is to say they are known to eat a variety of foods types including a multitude of fruits and berries plus lizards, rodents, small birds and an assortment of insects.

What should I feed my Toucans or Toucanettes?

Toucans and Toucanettes do not chew their food into pieces like parrots and they do not have a crop for the storage of food therefore it is important food be presented in small easy to swallow, bite size pieces. Hemochromatosis or iron storage disease is a dietary concern for captive Toucans and Toucanettes. Current dietary recommendations are for diets low in iron.

Pelleted Diets

Some pelleted bird diets have excessively high iron values that may contribute to Hemochromatosis or iron storage disease in Toucans and Toucanettes. Low iron pellets for soft billed birds are also available. Dry kibble dog foods low in iron such as U/D by Hills® are recommended. Since pellets and dog food are dry, the bird's droppings tend to be less messy. Some companies have reduced the iron content in their pellets to less than 90 ppm (90mg/kg). Check with your veterinarian and the pellet manufacturers for the latest iron content recommendations.

- Consult your veterinarian if encountering any problems with diet or the health of the bird.
- Remember, you train the bird, do not let it train you.



Fruits and Vegetables

A large variety of diced fruits such as those listed at the end of this hand out should be offered every day and should constitute a greater portion of the diet. A guideline is 1/2 – 1 cup per bird per day. Cut them into manageable pieces depending on the size of the bird and offer a fruit salad. Offer fruits in a separate dish. If your bird appears to develop a particular fancy for one food item, stop feeding it temporarily to promote the eating of other foods.

A small amount of various sliced, shredded or finely diced vegetables may be offered but this should NOT be a large part of a Toucans and Toucanettes diet. Pale vegetables, with a high water composition (i.e. iceberg or head lettuce, celery) offer very little nutritional value. **Avocado is reported to be potentially toxic.**

Fruits and vegetables must be washed thoroughly to remove chemicals.

- Treat your bird like a small child; offer a small piece of a variety of food items daily and never stop trying.
- A well balanced diet must be maintained at all times.
- Consult your veterinarian if encountering any problems with diet or the health of the bird.
- Remember, you train the bird, do not let it train you.

Water

Fresh clean water must be available at all times. Depending on the quality of your tap water, consider the use of bottled water. Dishes must be cleaned thoroughly every day with soap and water. With Toucans and Toucanettes, the water will be used to bathe in as well. Keep it clean.

What about other foods?

As a general rule any wholesome, nutritious food that you and your family eat, your bird can eat. Some birds even enjoy a small amount of hard boiled egg occasionally. Toucans and Toucanettes may occasionally enjoy pinky mice or insects such as mealworms, wax worms, crickets and other insects (soft bodied insects are more nutritious). Follow the general guidelines discussed above and use your *common sense*. It is common sense that *junk food*, chocolate, products containing caffeine and alcoholic beverages be avoided.

Do I need to use a vitamin-mineral mixture?

Does your bird need extra vitamins, minerals or amino-acids? The powdered supplements are often regarded as more stable such as Nekton-S® (by Nekton-Produkte), Quiko® or Prime® (by Hagen). Mix these products in water or preferably apply directly onto moist food. One opinion suggests that a bird eating 75 - 80% of its diet in the form of nectar food may not need supplements. Specific vitamins or minerals may be more important at various times during a bird's life (e.g. egg laying - requires calcium supplementation). Calcium supplements are available if your Toucans or Toucanettes are determined to be deficient.

- Your veterinarian can help you assess your bird's diet and its particular needs.

Tips

- Always monitor the amount of food eaten every day by each bird.
- Offer fresh water every day.
- Offer a variety of fresh foods every day.
- Offer fresh fruits and vegetables every day
- Clean all food and water dishes daily.
- **No** to a food item one day does not mean **no forever** - KEEP TRYING!



Some suggested food items include (concentrate on fruits):

apple
apricots
asparagus
banana
beans (cooked)
• such as:
 chic pea
 kidney
 lentils
 lima
 mung
 navy
 soy
beet
blueberry
broccoli
brussel sprouts
cabbage
cantaloupe
carrot
carrot tops
cherries (not the pit)
Chinese vegetables (bok
choy)
coconut

corn
cucumber
dandelion leaves
dates
endive
fig
grapes
grapefruit
kale
kiwi
melons
mango
nectarines
orange
papaya
parsnip
peaches
pear
peas
peppers (red/green & hot)
pineapple
plum
pomegranate
potato (boiled)
pumpkin



raisins (soaked over night)
raspberry
rice (brown)
romaine lettuce
spinach
sprouted seeds
squash
strawberry
sweet potato
tomato
watermelon
zucchini