

# Diet for Large Parrots

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(e.g., Amazons, greys, cockatoos, macaws)



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## Recommended Diet

For most pet psittacines (parrots) I recommend a diet consisting of:

- 80% formulated commercial diet (e.g., "pellets" such as Zupreem, Harrison's Adult Lifetime, Lafebbers, Roudybush, Kaytee, etc. OR a hulled seed/formulated matrix diet such as Lafeber Nutriberries).
- 20% fresh vegetables and greens. These can be presented cooked or raw. Good options include kale, leaf lettuce, peas, sweet potato, squash, green beans, cauliflower, broccoli. Avoid high starch items such as potato or corn.
- A small amount of seed or nut fragments, presented as a reward from your fingers or from a foraging toy, NOT for "free" in a dish.

If your bird does not already eat pellets, you must transition their diet very carefully. This is especially important for small birds (e.g., conures, cockatiels, budgies and smaller). Below are guidelines for your species:

## Steps for Diet Conversion of Medium to Large Parrots

1. **Separate food:** During this introduction period, offer pellets in a separate bowl from the old diet. Don't mix pellets and seed together as it will encourage them to dig under the pellets and waste more food.
2. **Daily food familiarization sessions:** With the bird sharing time with you from its training perch, eat (or act like you are eating) the food in front of your bird. Make sure that you really enjoy the food item and show your enjoyment to your bird. Offer some to your bird, but do not force them to eat it. Give them a limited time to accept the offer (a few seconds). If they don't take it, keep "eating" the food and make it obvious that you are enjoying it. Do this daily as it must be seen as a regular flock behavior.
3. **Trial Period:** Once your bird is eating the pellets during these familiarization sessions, you can try removing the old diet for a day. Change the papers at the bottom of the cage and remove the dish used for the old diet. If they eat the pellets then you will see formed droppings in the bottom of the cage, even if it's unclear if they are actually eating the pellets. The droppings may be larger and lighter in color than when on seed. Additionally, food colorings, if present, may be seen (orange coloration for example in Zupreem pellets).
4. **Keep Going!:** If they pass the trial period day then you can keep going with just pellets and vegetables/greens. If they do not eat then the droppings will be smaller with white urates and tiny, dark, poorly formed feces. If this occurs, offer the old diet again and

keep doing your daily familiarization exercises. Sometimes it takes days or weeks of persistence so don't give up!

5. **Treats/Training:** Tiny fragments of nuts or small seeds can still be used as rewards for good behavior or trick training. They will be much more valuable to your bird if they are not part of the everyday diet. For most birds, this should equate to no more than a few grey-stripe sunflower seeds or a single peanut or two.