

Part 2

A picture below of a really unhealthy diet being fed to wild birds. This spectacle is from a friends house 10 minutes from my home. I can teach people what to feed Lorikeets, but I can not “make” them do anything...just like your husband, or your teenager. Reminds me of a lecture I once went to... where the Doctor said in response to the question, “What do we do in order to get the outcome we want for our patient?” Somebody said, “Just make them do it”. His response to that was,

“I can’t even get my wife to do something I want... and she says she loves me...”



Dr T. look like this =>

& We all



&



It took a long time for the group to settle down after that discourse. Good old Dr T; my mentor.... is correct. We can educate but the horse still has to drink once we get it to the water. Good intentions is not enough. The other person needs to listen and learn, understand and then do.

Below....Rainbow Lorikeets and Scaly Breasted Lorikeets







Sulphur Crested Cockatoo crashing the party



Below - Not a Lorikeet but photo taken at the same location as above of an adult King Parrot.



Bathing

This is probably overlooked in many ways. But is also a part of good husbandry as well as diet. Make sure you always provide adequate bathing opportunities for your lorikeet. They love to frolic and bathe (and make a great mess when they do so). This keeps their 'waxy' feathers clean and protective (7). In the providing their bath in this manner, remember, they are not people and will drink the same water, so make sure this

water receptacle is cleaned and the water is changed daily. Some indoor places have this dish in a box-like structure to reduce water splash going throughout their cages. This seems to be a good idea and makes sense to me.



Breeding Diet

I thought I would mention this as some people may be unaware that in regards to the necessary feeding of a captive nectar/fruit diet, although is great for adult birds; it is deficient in the captive setting for feeding chicks. This is because in the wild, we have the seasonality and availability of, insects, fruits with higher than normal protein content (eg: Australian figs, as most human food varieties of fruits are low in protein) and of course POLLEN - the high protein bar equivalent for the Lorikeet. It is imperative that the young chicks being reared are fed a higher than normal protein content during their rearing. Otherwise these chicks WILL be nutritionally compromised and breeding results and death of chicks or poor egg hatch rates may become increasingly seen within the captive setting. Higher protein content of food sources such as sprouted seed, boiled egg, mealworms, crickets, pupae etc and increasing the pollen content to mimic the breeding seasons flush of floral availability are all good ways to increase the sources and variety of amino acids available to breeding parents. A good breeding diet for those interested in rates of protein required would be in the vicinity of 18 to 23% of the days servings in total protein content. Some of that protein should be animal/insect based. Personally, because I am responsible for feeding thousands of birds, I use egg powder. The reason I prefer egg protein is that it is a) very close to pollen protein in regards to the amino acid profile, b) egg protein is the highest quality protein available, c) the most readily digestible form of animal protein and d) for aviculturalists at the small scale level, eggs are readily available and comes in small packages, called eggs and conveniently comes out of the fridge, then we hard boil them. d) (4) also shows that egg protein is of very high grade and digestibility in Lorikeets. Eggs are prepackaged birds in the making, so all amino acids are right there in just the right quantities. Easy as.

I'm eggstatic, aren't you? Egg proteins have the highest biological value and digestibility of all proteins and are essentially the gold standard of reference to which all

other proteins are commonly compared to for nutritional value for both animal and human digestion, absorption and metabolism purposes (4, 11).

How easy is that - I have been reliably told that it apparently takes approximately 10-13 to hard boil an egg for long enough to kill all pathogens. I learned that fun fact just today, from Dr Jones, which thoroughly explains why I don't work in a kitchen and nor am I allowed to at home. Once I was BBQ'ing a chicken for the whole family using my new beaut rotisseriewell ... that's a well remembered story for another day perhaps....

Make sure if you use eggs, you hard boil them so that there is a reduced capacity for disease transmission from the chicken egg to your birds. We have ours pasteurised, powdered and then air dried at 170 degrees Celcius, but understand if you are not able to meet this kind of standard. Not only do I like eggs and pollen in Lorikeet dietary husbandry, so do Veterinarians in the mixes that they recommend when looking after birds (9). So it's not just me as a Veterinary Nurse/Technician for nearly 30 years saying this. The professionals are saying exactly the same thing. There has been a rumour that says egg is dangerous in bird diets. I have not been able to find and nor have any of the nay sayers been able to direct me to the research that says egg protein is bad. I am more of the opinion that soy and milk proteins would be more of an issue than egg proteins. Mostly I see the majority of the egg nay sayers promote milk based or soy based nectars. I have a problem with their logic. Lorikeets don't hang around cows looking for their chance to swoop on down and grab a teat and suckle for milk proteins nor land upon soy plants in the wild ... as far as I am aware. Nature knows best is all I care about and I try and replicate what I can and discard none-sense arguments that come up from time to time. I don't ignore the arguments presented. But the nay sayers can not identify where in nature their preference originates from. Therefore I take the personal view to ignore their attempt to validate their choice as being in any way shape or form as being of substance or legitimacy.



So, **remember**, ... Breeding means increase the available protein to your birds. They may take as much of this or as little as they wish usually and without harm to themselves or their chicks. When using hard boiled egg or any other form of protein

enrichment, ensure your hygiene is kept up to scratch thereby making it impossible to have any food poisoning cases with rotten or rotting of the supplementation feeding. Harmful bacteria and fungi love living in wet, highly nutritious foods. They secrete toxins and can also negatively affect the healthy microbial flora within your bird's intestines. Trust me, I'm a nurse ... You do not want to be feeding any of these noxious organisms to your birds.



Well I am sure everyone with experience will do something different; however it is a must to see what some people do with their own birds. To ensure unbiasedness of my own preferences and what it is that "I" think is good for a day to day maintenance or breeding diet, I have asked a Lorikeet breeder to send me their method of feeding their birds (12). Here it is below. It remains unedited except for their name.

My question to the breeder....

Hi K.....,

Just wondering if you could assist please?

I am currently doing up the article for the UK Parrot Society and was wondering if you could give me a run down of the list of things you feed your birds and the qty of these items per pair/per day or /per week that you feed of these items?

Many thanks for your assistance in advance.

Joe

Tricky question as it varies but I will do my best.

Firstly I free feed dry so that is available 24/7 and replenished as often as needed.

I will work with pairs, each day I feed about 2/3 cup of wet per pair per day. That's not exact as I mix about a litre of wet per day (more if there are chicks in nests) and share that out among the pairs but it equates to roughly 2/3 a cup per pair per day.

In addition they get fresh food every day.

Their standard items most days are:-

Celery leaves and a little stalk but mostly leaves, frozen mix of (peas, carrots, corn, beans, broccoli); apple, pear, grapes (2 per pair), orange or mandarin (1 medium size mandarin or 1 smaller size orange shared between 9 pairs)

And a piece of corn on the cob (generally about 2cm piece unless they have chicks then its 1/3 - 1/2 a cob for those with chicks)

In addition I then mix up the other ingredients depending on what is in season and what looks good at the fruit/veg shop each week. These extras include:-

Cauliflower, capsicum, wombok, cucumber, pumpkin, kiwi fruit, snow peas, fresh beans, sweet potato, beetroot, zucchini, brussell sprouts, Kale, Silverbeet, Asian Greens, stone fruit, melons, Mango, Pawpaw, Pineapple

I aim for roughly 70/30 veg to fruit and its probably a cup of fresh food per pair per day normally (not including the piece of corn). I've never actually measured the quantity of fresh food I just go by look when chopping each morning. When they are feeding chicks I double their food from about day 3 from the first hatching and if I don't handraise I triple their food (double in the morning and a standard amount again in the afternoon) as needed.

My spoilt flock are overfed I'm sure but they are healthy and happy and more often than not they eat the lot.

Due to work I normally only feed in the mornings and they eat their wet mix while it is still warm and then move onto their fresh foods throughout the day. When they run out of fresh food they snack on the dry.

When I have birds inside (we don't currently have a resident pet bird only our aviary flock) I feed the same things but in smaller quantity for singles. I also split inside birds into two feeds per day as I replenish their fresh food after work and feed a small portion of fresh wet mix before they are put to bed.

Hope that helps in some way

Regards
K

Let's discuss this diet.

I have not set this up. This is a real life evaluation of a breeder's diet as they have given it to me. They had no idea I was planning to do this discussion for publication purposes. Funny; yes? But now we can do what nobody else every has done before. We can look at this in a serious and unbiased manner with the intent to learn something from each other.

Firstly; I note there is not one probiotic in this list of feedstuffs. Secondly - we can see that there is not one dairy product ingredient in there as well. Thirdly, there is not one "processed" human food or supplement in there. Great work K.

The other thing you will notice is that **K does not** rely solely upon the wet or dry commercial product they purchase from myself nor the other commercial Lorikeet foods they feed to their birds. This is a key element of good nutrition.

Why do I say this? Should I not be saying my product is the best? Should I not be saying only use my product so I can increase my sales? Well it is in my opinion - the best, otherwise I wouldn't bother making it when there are so many to choose from. Every man and his dog has a home recipe or makes a commercially available formula (everyone running around like a bunch of wacky scientists in their basement laboratory cooking up a storm). However, the number one reason I have not mentioned the name of our products is because I'm not stupid and nor are you. Secondly, because there is not one commercial formulation nor will there every be, that can claim that their diets are "balanced" formulations for ALL Lorikeet species. "Balanced" is also a subjective word - unless you have scientific data to support the claim, in which there is none. We do have some very good data for Chickens, Turkeys, Budgies and Cockatiel, but not on Lorikeets, let alone a single species of Lorikeet. So forget the claims - The claims are sales pitches only. This is all obvious, because we are dealing with 50 odd species of Lorikeets. Don't believe me? I'm a Primate, so are you - I don't feed a Marmoset, which is also a Primate, human food. Obvious. What is a Marmoset? Click here => [image of Marmosets](#). So, how can anyone possibly come up with a single formulation that is balanced for so many species of birds? For goodness sakes, even within the same genera, there are numerous dietary requirements and metabolic differences that differ between them. It is just not

feasible financially, nor practical, to manufacture a **balanced** diet for all species of Lorikeet.

Balanced diets to me means that we as bird owners, need to try and mimic as close as is possible what mother nature provides in the wild. The emphasis is “try”. We are not miracle workers and we do not live in a fantasy land. So what can WE, as bird keepers do? Well, because Lorikeets are opportunistic seasonal gatherers of food and fly from outcrop to another outcrop of food source, their diet will alter throughout the year depending upon what happens to be available at the time. In this light...You will notice that our breeder mentions fresh greens as being a part of their daily feeding regimen. They also say, right at the top of their reply to my question, that what they feed “**varies**”. This is either unintentional or deliberate. However it is true to nature's way of feeding the birds in the wild. Therefore what they are doing “mimics” what nature does. Thus, the greens will, I hope, be seasonally available excepting the frozen items. The latter of which I am guessing is fed after warming them up (cooking, then allowing to cool so the birds are not burned) thus making the greens softer and avoids damage to the bristles on the birds tongues. Smart owner. Again I reassert the assumption that the frozen items are cooked and are offered year round. The fresh stuff will more likely be the seasonal variation that they elude to doing.

The breeder mentions portion size. Primarily portion size is managed according to species size. So take onboard those values above with regards to volume of food with some of your own common sense when dealing with your own birds. The birds will tell you what amounts are good for them. But then again, don't allow too large a portion size - because an overweight bird is basically a bird with malnutrition. If your birds are overweight - it's your fault. Be sensible people. Give the birds something else to do other than eat. There are many husbandry methods out there in the public sphere that is beyond the scope of this article. So educate yourself. A good place to start would be in mentioning this snippet from this document below for Musk Lorikeets (13). What a great idea do you think?

Enrichment Calendar for *G. concinna*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Honey	Browse	Egg	Toys	Flowers	Nail	Egg	Toys
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Browse	Egg	Honey	Flowers	Nail	Toys	Browse	Flowers
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Egg	Honey	Toys	Browse	Flowers	Nail	Honey	Egg
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32
Browse	Nail	Flowers	Toys	Honey	Egg	Flowers	Honey

Key –

1. **Honey** = Spray honey water on browse.
2. **Browse** = Different left over native vegetation.
3. **Flowers** = All native flowers as mentioned in 6.2 captive diet.
4. **Toys** = Bird toys bought or made refer to figure 9.1 under behavioural enrichment.
5. **Nail** = Different placement of nail fruit.
6. **Egg** = Refer to egg cake recipe in 6.4 presentation of food.

Below...Musk Lorikeets



I guess we need to discuss temperature as well.

You guys live in a cold country. I live in a hot one. So what's the problem with that? Well for starters, 20 degrees Celsius is cold to me. Inside my fridge is warmer than that... Jokes aside, there are two temperature concerns - too hot or too cold. Lorikeets love nectar and nectar substitutes such as ours. If you are in a place where temperatures are below zero Celsius, obviously freezing of the nectar means the birds will not be able to eat it. Temperatures above 25 Celsius will aid the growth of micro-organisms that can spoil or ferment the nectar. The solution is, make the liquid at a suitable temperature above Zero and below 25 Celsius. Feed only what will be eaten within the hour after giving it to the birds. To counteract these troubles of extremes in temperatures, you will find dry mix formulations are suitable. Problem solved. They do not spoil easily in higher temperatures, and freezing ambient temperatures will not affect the birds ability to eat the mix. Again, this is common sense and you have plenty of this attribute within yourself to recognise and problem solve issues that are pertinent to your own bird's environment.

Below...Dusky Lorikeets



Another mention is if you are cooking greens then make sure the dispensing temperature of the food is below burning point. Again, use your nose, your the adult. Don't be stupid.

One thing not mentioned by our breeder diet example is the availability of grit in the diet and calcium supplementation. These are good additions to the diet of most birds and I am of the firm opinion that these items should be available for Lorikeets as well. After showing the breeder this article in draft format, they have assured me they make sure a calcium block is available at all times for their birds. Thumbs up. I still think some grit is worth the trouble of sourcing and providing some for them.

A well known tourist spot Queensland Australia



Hygiene is another key to maintaining good health in your birds. Keep things fresh and remove leftovers. Clean food and water receptacles daily and enjoy your birds.

To conclude, you now have some basics as to why we feed Lorikeets what we do. We have explored a real life breeder's choice of foods for their birds, unbiased from my own commercial interests.

We have discussed this regimen and talked about the why's and how's in regards to amounts to feed and when to feed. In addition, the relationship to which phase of life the Lorikeets you are keeping and your dietary choices you make for them.

We have discussed thoughts and also facts of what not to feed to your Lorikeets plus the notion of using your own brain in a responsible manner.



It is hoped that this article has cleared up some myths and realities for the perspective of new keepers of Lorikeets. Indeed we also hope to have assisted in the further development of the more experienced keeper and or breeder of Lorikeets and wish you all the best in our unique hobby of keeping Lorikeets.

If you would like to read some excellent tips for feeding your parrots another great place to look is right here => [The Parrot Society of UK Parrot Nutrition](#). Make sure you read Part 1 and Part 2.

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