

# All Bird Clinic of the Palm Beaches

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## Tips for Converting your Bird to Pellets

### 1. Getting Started:

- Discuss with your avian veterinarian what weights are appropriate for your bird while converting the diet.
- Schedule an appointment with your avian veterinarian to discuss what pellets are best for your bird, and how you should approach switching the diet. You should also have a general health exam at this time to decide if your bird is healthy enough to undergo a diet change.
- Do not take away your bird's regular food and expect the bird to get hungry enough to eat the new food. Birds will starve rather than eat something unfamiliar.
- Weigh your bird at the same time every morning for two weeks to establish normal fluctuations in weight. Report any serious fluctuations (10% or more) to your avian veterinarian.
- Place a bowl of pellets near the highest perch. Most birds will eat from the highest bowl first.
- Start mixing half the pellets and half the regular diet. (Continue to weigh your bird daily.)
- If your bird continues to be leery of the pellets, remove all perches from the cage so the bird **HAS** to sit on the food dish.
- Monitor your bird's feces closely during a diet change. Watery droppings with very little formed feces may indicate that your bird is not eating enough.
- As the bird starts to eat the pellets, gradually reduce the amount of the regular diet and increase the pellets.

### 2. Tried and True Tips for LARGE BIRDS:

- Let your bird see another bird (or you) eat the pellets. Many times birds wish to eat what their owners eat. We call this: "birdie see, birdie do".
- Feed the regular diet for 30 minutes in the morning, take it out and replace with pellets for rest of day, then feed regular diet for 30 minutes at night if pellets are not eaten.
- Mix your bird's favorite fruit into the pellets so the bird gets a mouthful of pellets with its fruit. Mushy fruit or juice works best, as it sticks to the pellets very well. Remove after 4-6 hours to avoid spoiled food being eaten.
- Try going back to hand feeding a juvenile formula with a syringe and then rewean to pellets. This should only be done under the guidance of an avian veterinarian.

### 3. Tried and True Tips for SMALL BIRDS:

- Most small birds love to eat millet, so try grinding up the pellets in a blender, or buy a mash product (i.e. Harrison's High Potency Mash), and mix millet in the mash. The bird **HAS** to go through the mash to get the millet. When using this method, try using the following steps:
  - Take a stalk of brown millet and pull the buds off the stalk. Put approximately one tablespoon of a mash product in a bowl and add approximately 25-30 buds of millet. Bury some of the millet and also leave some visible on top of the mash. Each successive day, put in fresh mash and decrease the number of buds, until finally there is only mash and a couple of millet buds.
  - If your bird refuses to eat the mash, give the bird some more millet, let him eat millet until his feces and behavior look more normal, then try weaning off the millet another day.

### 4. When All Else Fails:

- Schedule an appointment with your avian veterinarian. They often switch bird's diets and can tell you some tricks they use.
- Board your bird with your vet and allow them to switch the diet. **This is often the best way to switch your bird!!** Your vet will carefully monitor the bird's weight and health. Most birds switch diets very quickly when removed from the "comfort" of home and your vet will have more experience with diet changes.