

rine. Success with any sprouting method is only as good as your water. No matter how "clean" seeds are after soaking if they are rinsed with contaminated water, there will be trouble. If your water is not 100% pure, simply don't rinse after the soak. Remember, the stabilizer is non-toxic and the very small residue has an inoffensive taste. Another simple concept must be remembered. Everyone knows that any fresh fruit or other moist food left in the flight will "spoil" rapidly if ambient temperature and humidity are high. Of course the same is true for sprouts, but to a lesser degree because they are alive, still possessing natural defense mechanisms. Feed only amounts that will be completely consumed in the time period pertinent to your environmental conditions.

Dead, dry food is as unappealing to microbes as it is to parrots. You will find that lories fed low sugar, live diets, will have much greater continuance of energy output and will not show hyper or starvation symptoms without food before them all day. In very cold weather, a limited increase in simple sugars, in the form of fruit, and complex carbohydrates will be needed for body heat production.

Converting lories to a live food diet must be done with care. Birds that have been fed refined and highly sweetened diets with synthetic vitamins will suffer if presented with sprouts only, particularly in cold weather. Their digestion and metabolism will adapt gradually. The secret is to reduce the quantity of total daily food. Hunger works wonders on the road to the acceptance of a better diet, for birds as well as people. The keen eye of the aviculturist must guide this beneficial transition. At China Prairie we settled on approximately 90% sprouted

food for our pairs in summer; 75% in winter depending upon each pair's needs.

Another important factor in providing live food for your birds is beneficial microorganisms. They are the living workers that create balance and disease resistance in the intestinal tract. Most often in aviculture only a single strain of lactobacillus is provided. We have found that other microbes are also useful and the combination of six microbes that we use are definitely more successful than lacto alone. Some lories, particularly the Lorius group, relish meal worms. They "juice" the insects, seldom eating the skin and head. This is evidence that lories probably consume insects in some form in the wild. And, of course, lories utilize flowers as food. We have found that they much prefer wild flowers to the larger domesticated ones.

Why feed live food instead of quality cooked food? The power of life is an element beyond the nuts and bolts of its material components. Seeds that sprout carry that potential. The fact that it will sprout at all demonstrates vitality. A small seed weighing a hundredth of an ounce is capable of transforming itself into a plant weighing many pounds. Yes, elements from the soil and the air are incorporated into the plant, but a dead seed has completely lost the energy to participate in this process.

The 6,000 year old Ayurvedic system of health and healing of India identifies this energy as Prana. The Chinese call it Chi. But we all know the invigorating feeling that comes from eating a good salad. Would we consider cooking a salad? This energy is perceived to decline after the "death" of the plant. Both growth and decay are essential to the cycle of life. Which side of the

dividing line do you want your birds on, growth or decay? For those who promote the use of lifeless powdered or pelleted food for their birds, I ask that they eat the human equivalent themselves.

It is true that a sprouted lentil can contain 300% more vitamin C than the same bean unsprouted and that a sprouted radish seed can contain 3,000% more vitamin A than raw radish by weight, but the real advantage in feeding live food is that it carries the message of life itself. We can not recreate nature in a flight cage, but we can provide complex, living food for our birds at little additional cost and with little extra effort. The results are very impressive. ➤

Runaway Rainbows!

The zoo facility in the following episode requested not to be identified.

A zoo keeper in charge of morning nectar feeding had no sooner begun the task in the lorikeet enclosure, when he noticed an extra buzz of excitement. A pair of Rainbow Lorikeets were enthusiastically jabbering and frog-hopping around outside *on top of the cage!* It seems they had burrowed their way through the grassy turf under the base of the aviary wire and were blissfully flying free.

"Oh, oh!" thought the worker, and promptly called staff superiors. A capture party was organized and a net was brought out.

Well, those two Trichoglossus took one look at that net and immediately flew across the lake! That was that for the zoo staff; no catching them now.

Late the same afternoon, the avian exhibit employees were summoned to an entertaining commotion outside the concession stand. Two thoroughly captivating Rainbow Lorikeets were eagerly bouncing from shoulder to dixie cup sampling a "gourmet" luncheon of ice cream and treats. It was a simple matter for the lory keepers to go over and retrieve the escapees. ➤

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