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the Vet's Corner

by Kendal P. Svedeen, D.V.M.
Mission Viejo, California

Q. My veterinarian tells me to offer most anything edible to my birds, and if they like it, fine. I know that there are certain foods that could create problems with a bird's digestive tract, but what are they?

A. I am a staunch advocate of feeding a bird a varied diet of table food, snacks, vegetables, meat, and even desserts. Among the healthiest birds I have encountered, are those who have had free access to table food. Lean meat, vegetables of all types, cooked eggs, bread, tortillas, cakes, cheese and anything else the bird will accept. The only foods that may create problems are iceberg lettuce, which has zero nutritive value plus a reversed calcium to phosphorus ratio, or foods that contain highly spiced or salted ingredients. A small amount of potato chips or Fritos could be a treat and a good training aid. Grapes, apples, citrus fruits, and papaya tend to cause what I call a "functional" diarrhea. If the bird likes these fruits, offer them to him or her once or twice a week. Generally speaking, about 15 to 20 percent of a bird's ration should consist of a variety of vegetables, fruits, and snacks.

Q. I have had some problems with mites and lice in my outside aviaries. I have tried a wide variety of insecticides which have been either marginally effective, or have proven to be toxic to my birds. What insecticide should I use that is both safe and effective?

A. For many years pyrethrin and piperonyl butoxide formulas have been the safest insecticide preparations to use on and around birds. They are non toxic, but the problem is that they only have a "knock down" effect on the pests without actually killing them. In addition, the residual potency of them is very short-lived, like a matter of hours. In recent research, a new product has been developed which is a synthetic pyrethroid. In my experience, it has proven to be an effective killing agent, is safe, and has some residual effectiveness. The spray is manufactured by Hart-Delta Laboratories of Baton Rouge, LA, and is basically used for flea control in dogs and cats. This particular product contains some oil for coat-conditioning purposes in mammals, which should not be used on birds. However, they also produce a spray which does not contain the oil, and it is called "Veterinary Hospital and Kennel Spray." It can be obtained through your local veterinarian, and should be used judiciously. Spray the bottom of the aviary or cage once weekly, being cautious not to contaminate food or water supplies. If birds can be treated individually, spray a small amount under each wing and on their feet and legs every two weeks. ●

Avian Research Awards

In order to advance the science of aviculture, the American Federation of Aviculture has created a Special Research Committee. A special fund has been set aside for the specific purpose of granting monies for research in specified areas of aviculture. The Special Research Committee will review grant applications and award grants for suitable proposals. Areas of primary interest include: avian nutrition, infectious diseases and disease control techniques, diagnostic procedures, incubation and artificial insemination techniques, field studies and general avicultural techniques.

All proposals will be reviewed by committee members and consultants knowledgeable in each field and must be scientifically sound and feasible. Preference in awarding grants will be

given to members of AFA.

The deadline for receiving applications is June 1, 1981. Grants will be awarded at the AFA national convention, August 4-8, 1981, in Washington, D.C. All grant recipients will make periodic progress reports to the Special Research Committee. Results will be reported in the AFA Watchbird. Most grants will be awarded for one year. Reapplications can be made for subsequent years. A brief letter of intent should be submitted with a request for application forms to Susan L. Clubb, D.V.M., 5122 SW 128 Place, Miami, FL 33166. Any donations large or small will be appreciated and will go directly into the Grant Fund. Send Donations to: AFA Special Research Fund, P.O. Box 1568, Redondo Beach, CA., 90279. ●