

## Why Should I Give Vitamins to my birds? I don't take them— Wrong

Thousands of years ago, when man was a hunter gatherer we ate whatever was available. We could move around the land in search of fresh food. In the good times we prospered but when food was short many died of starvation. Then we learnt the art of agriculture.

Tied to our fields, we were forced to store food from one season to the next. We learnt to ripen (dry) grain, salt our meat, make cheese and cook our foods. The preserved food was less nutritious than fresh food but it ran out less frequently, we suffered fewer famines and so man became more successful.

Even these days, with our hi-tech agriculture and food processing, our food preservation techniques still mean that much nutrition is lost in the cooking, freezing, pickling and drying. So the food industry now compensates for this loss. Just read the side panel of your cereal packet and you will see that vitamins and minerals are being added for you. Similarly, your margarine has vitamins added—most products do. So you do take many vitamins.

But it doesn't stop there. As livestock farming becomes more intensive more animals are fed on grain instead of nutritious grass and other fresh plant material. So farmers add vitamin and mineral supplements to their animals' feeds to ensure the animals are healthy, grow fast and that their meat or milk is nutritious.

A decade or more ago, birdkeepers scoured the hedgerows for seeding grasses and other nutritious green food. Green food is full of vitamins, minerals and protein. However, to supply all your birds' vitamin needs this way, fresh grasses would need to make up 100 per cent of the diet, as in the wild. Not very practical.

So birdkeepers depend on dry seed with its very poor vitamin and protein content. This is just like the farm

animals being fed on grain without supplements. Indeed it is rather like feeding prisoners on plain bread and water and we don't regard that as morally acceptable any more.

Vetafarm once received a phone call from a rather distressed beginner Budgerigar breeder. She had bought some products from us at a National Exhibition, but she had been told by the champion breeders in her local club that her birds needed nothing more than seed and water. To this meagre diet she added a little eggfood just twice a week. I have no doubt these advisers believed that what they said was true and I'm sure they meant well. In my experience they were either using supplements without realising it (most commercial eggfoods have a small vitamin supplementation) or they were the type of people who relish the fact that their high-quality birds are difficult to breed. In five months our caller had had not produced a single chick from her eight pairs—Another newcomer to the hobby lost through avoidable disappointment? Hopefully, this lady's bad experience was corrected within a short time.

In case any Parrot breeders among you are feeling complacent because you give your birds fruit and vegetables so don't need vitamin supplements, consider this:

Steve Bourke tripled his chick output when he added Vetafarm vitamins to his bird's seed, fruit and vegetable diet. Graham Eden also had a fantastic breeding season by adding extra supplements to **Parrot Pellets** (already supplemented) and fruits. So in conclusion—you do eat vitamin supplements and your birds should too. It is very easy to add Vetafarm's **Soluvet** vitamins to your birds daily diet.

ARTICLE BY: DR COLIN DAVIS BVSc JP

### VETAFARM

3 Bye Street, Wagga Wagga, NSW 2650  
PO Box 5244, Wagga Wagga, NSW 2650  
Phone: 02 69256222 International Phone: +61 2 69256222  
Fax 02 69 256333 International Fax: +61 2 69256333  
Email: [vetafarm@vetafarm.com.au](mailto:vetafarm@vetafarm.com.au)  
Internet: [www.vetafarm.com.au](http://www.vetafarm.com.au)