Quick Tips

For Converting Your Bird to Harrison’s Bird Foods

Some birds will readily eat Harrison’s, while others may require a little help. If your bird exhibits resistance to eating the Harrison’s nuggets, try the following quick tips:

1. **Bake the Change**
   Harrison’s Bird Bread mix can be used as an extremely effective conversion tool. Food that the bird currently eats can be added to the mix and baked in the bread.

2. **Fly the Coop**
   Change the bird’s environment. Try moving your bird to a new enclosure, such as a box, aquarium or even a new cage. Remove all the toys, perches and bowls and offer High Potency on a solid surface of the floor.

3. **Mirror Mirror on the Floor:**
   Sprinkling food over a mirror or sheet of white paper placed on the bottom of the enclosure works especially well for budgies and cockatiels. A bird old enough to be socialized may eat to compete with the “rival” bird in the mirror. A white paper background may draw attention to the food particles.
Gradual Weaning from Seeds
Slowly “wean” your bird from seeds. In the evening, offer seeds from the food bowl for only 1 hour. Then, remove the seeds and replace with High Potency formula. The next day, give your bird seeds for only 30 minutes in the morning and evening. The third day, reduce the time to only 15 minutes twice a day. And finally, offer only High Potency on the fourth day. Watch the bird’s droppings and weight. This restriction of seeds is not recommended for budgies, finches or birds under 50 grams.

Mind Over Mealtime Feeding
Feed your bird at your mealtime. Place the food on a plate, move it around with your finger or a spoon and pretend to eat it in front of your bird.

Power Treats and Mash
Offer Power Treats, High Potency Pepper or High Potency Mash. Birds love the taste of these products, and one may be the key to your bird’s conversion success. Power Treats can be crushed for smaller birds.

Use an Avian Influencer
Use a converted bird as a role model. House your bird near another that’s already eating Harrison’s Bird Foods, or use a “trainer bird” as a role model for eating.
Warm or Moistened Food

Warm the High Potency slightly or moisten it with a small amount of organic fruit juice or other liquids.

Veterinary Supervision

Schedule a supervised diet change with your veterinarian. Some birds do not recognize Harrison’s as food, and placing the bird in a clinic where monitoring can be done will help keep your bird healthy through the diet conversion process.

Try, Try Again

When it comes to improving the diet, the biggest disservice you can do to your bird is to just give up after the bird shows resistance to conversion. If the conversion steps don’t work the first time, you can feed the familiar food for a short time and then try again. The effort is worthwhile for the long term health of your bird.

Watch Your Bird Closely

If any change in behavior, droppings or weight should occur, or if you are unsure about your bird's health, call your avian veterinarian and postpone the diet conversion.

**BEHAVIOR:** If the bird appears cold, listless, fluffed-up or reluctant to play or talk, reintroduce the previous diet and call your avian veterinarian.

**DROPPINGS:** (See page 5) If the bird’s droppings show very loose or significantly less feces, while the amount of urine/urates has increased, or the feces change color to yellow or dark green, consult your avian veterinarian. A color change to brown or light green is normal when converting to a formulated diet.

**WEIGHT:** Monitor the bird’s progress by weighing your bird daily with a gram scale. If the bird loses more than 10% body weight (3g = budgie or 10g = cockatiel), resume feeding the previous diet and call your veterinarian.
Diet Conversion for Small Birds

Some birds are hesitant to change diets to a healthy formula. You can jumpstart the process by replacing your bird’s previous seeds with JUMPSTART Grey Millet for 3 - 5 weeks. Organic foods help the bird detox and be more interested in trying new foods.

• Bird Bread can be baked in a number of shapes including muffins, mini-muffins or loaf (loaves can be cut into pieces).

• You can add your bird’s favorite seed to the Bird Bread mix, up to 20% for conversion. Baking seeds into the Bird Bread can be replaced by baking the Bird Bread as is, then pushing seed (and subsequently nuggets) into already baked pieces with your finger.

• Bird Bread has no preservatives. To keep it fresh, store baked Bird Bread pieces in the freezer, then allow a day's ration to thaw or warm prior to feeding.

• You can mix things up by adding up to 20% organic dark green, orange and yellow vegetables into the bread mix prior to baking.

Confirm the bird is really eating the food by weighing the bird daily and observing frequency, volume and color of their droppings. Droppings should never be hard, dark, watery or infrequent.

When your bird has been converted to a Harrison’s organic formula, taper gradually until Harrison’s formula makes up 75-80% of the total daily diet by weight (with 15-20% organic vegetables and 5% JUMPSTART Omega, or other omega-rich foods).

This method is best used in birds with eating habits that can be individually observed. Separate birds into different enclosures during this period if necessary.

Diet Conversion Method for Medium to Large Birds

• Make fresh Harrison’s nuggets available at all times throughout the day.

• Select ONE item that you know your bird is known to eat (in many birds this will be seeds). Discontinue every other item from the bird’s previous diet for the diet conversion period.

• Make that ONE item available three times a day, for a full 15 minutes (no shorter, no longer), then remove that food completely. Do not limit the amount of this food available during the 15-minute window (controlled meal). Space these feedings out by periods of 6 hours, if possible.

• Offer no other foods other than the High Potency nuggets outside of the controlled meal.

• Taper. Once the bird is eating the nuggets, remove one feeding window of the previous food. The more the bird eats of Harrison’s, a second feeding window can be removed.

• Once the bird is converted completely to nuggets, discontinue all previous food feeding windows.

• Never starve a bird.

• Power Treats and Bird Bread are also useful large bird conversion tools.
How to Evaluate Your Bird’s Droppings

Place clean white paper or other smooth surface in the bird’s enclosure, which can be used to collect the droppings. The normal appearance of the feces is usually soft and brown when the bird is eating a formulated diet (see photo) but may be abnormally dry and yellow or green with a seed diet. Black droppings are a cause for concern; consult your avian veterinarian. The normally clear urine may be increased in amount due to excess consumption of fruits and vegetables. Normal urates are creamy white waste from the kidneys and are often suspended in the liquid urine or are “wrapped around” the feces. Any color change in the urates is abnormal. A sick bird may show a change in the volume, color, consistency or frequency of droppings. Feces from egg-laying females, baby birds on hand-feeding formulas and the first void of the morning may be larger than normal, and urine output may increase when the bird is nervous or ill.

General Daily Feeding Recommendations

To maximize effectiveness of Harrison’s Bird Foods formulas, the nuggets should makeup 75-80% of the consumed daily diet (by weight), 15-20% organic vegetables and low sugar fruits, and 5% omega-rich sources.

- Feed fresh food daily, do not “top off.”
- Offer certified organic vegetables and fruits in small quantities. Select dark yellow meaty or dark green leafy items such as sweet potatoes, carrots, pumpkin, winter squash, broccoli, parsley, spinach, mango or papaya (no more then 20%).
- Include up to 5% omega rich foods like organic JUMPSTART Omega, flax seeds, pumpkin seeds.
- To help reduce waste, feed as distinct meals or try a smaller nugget size.

Feeding Other Foods

Feeding any other foods should be limited to no more than 20% of the overall diet. It is important to carefully follow the guidelines for Harrison’s to be fully effective.

Over-feeding of other foods may result in dilution of nutrients.

It is not recommended to supplement with vitamins, minerals or other bird or animal food products, as over-supplementation may occur.

Do not use Harrison’s nuggets with another formulated avian diet.
I wanted to share the amazing transformation that Harrison’s has done for my rescue Alexandrine. Her feathers were in horrible shape from a cheap seed diet. I converted her to Harrison’s and magic happened! The transformation has been incredible.

— Joanie Busbi

“Buddy, before and after. She was featherless and bleeding. It took me a week to transition her from sunflower seeds to Harrison’s High Potency Fine. She now eats Harrison’s nuggets and flies around my house. I rescued her on March 11, 2018 and she’s a VERY happy bird. She’s the love of my life.”

— Wanda Lynn

Photo credit: Wanda Lynn
“The couple on the tree branch are Zazu (grey male, born around March/April 2013) and Twixie (lutino female, born around March/April 2014). Around 2013/14, I started transitioning Zazu to a pellet diet. I used another brand of pellets that was readily available in pet stores in my country (Portugal). It smelled strongly of apples, and Zazu was struggling with them. I found an online pet store that carried Harrison’s (mascotasana.es) and they shipped to my country, so I tried it. Zazu enjoyed it so much that he ate until his crop bulged! I had never seen him with a bulging crop! I never looked back, and they’ve all eaten Harrison’s nuggets ever since.”
— Soraia Costa

“Harrison’s Bird Foods is the number one brand we offer our parrots in our Parrot Ambassadors Program—an outreach program reaching thousands of families and children across Western Washington. Our foraging product, Parrot Pockets, was designed with the Harrison’s Adult Lifetime diet in mind. We have seen great results in our birds with this diet, including the ability to feed this diet to our more sensitive species, the eclectus. We have never seen toe tapping, have seen improved feather condition and more. I cannot recommend this extruded diet enough.”

Debbie Goodrich
President, Flight Club Foundation
www.flightclubfoundation.org
### Diet Conversion Daily Weight Log

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www.Harrisonsbirdfoods.com
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