



# AVIAN

## Examiner

Number 16

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### Evaluating Nutritional Information

The following conversation occurred in a bird chat room on the Internet:

On Fri, 18 June 1999 12:08  
a bird owner writes:

“Wow. It is really interesting to me to read all of the posts about regular vets and avian vets and their diverse views on diets. It just seems crazy to me that a board certified avian vet would actually tell people to stop feeding their birds fresh foods and offer, instead, sterile bowls of pellets each day for the rest of their lives!

However, after reading about so many similar stories of exactly this, I fear this is what some avian ‘experts’ are actually doing and sadly, in some cases, it appears some push pellets for profit. I am very glad that there are plenty of aviculturists who are forward thinking in the areas of nutrition and diet. I guess I should also realize that a search for a veterinarian should include an interview and discussion of parrot care philosophy. One

## As They See Us

should not rely on credentials alone. Thank you to everyone for your eye-opening posts.”

**Response from Dianalee Deter:**

“I think we should look at this from a vet’s perspective and not assume that they are making these

suggestions because they are profit mongers. I can understand why they suggest this. I trim birds for people and I

see SO many that are really suffering nutritionally. MOST people can’t get a handle on how much and what to feed. I hear people say they feed fresh vegetables every day, but if you pry enough you find out that the bird only actually eats the corn. Or they feed so

much fresh food that they can’t tell what, if any the bird ate.

Many vets recommend Harrison’s and sell it themselves. Greg Harrison wants people to go to the vet to get it because he wants the feeding to be part of an overall well-

bird program. It covers as much of the basic nutrition as it can and is organic and has no artificial flavors or colors or preservatives AND it

tastes good.

There are MANY MANY birds who would benefit from having their diet be 90% Harrison’s rather than what they are eating now. It is IMPOSSIBLE to give everyone proper feeding instructions and have them be followed to the

**Most improper feeding is done out of the goodness of people’s hearts because they want to spoil their birds.**

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bird’s advantage. This isn’t laziness on the part of the vet, this is the reality of dealing with people. It is difficult to get people to listen and understand what is expected of them. And even more difficult to get people to actually follow the instructions.

Most improper feeding is done out of the ‘goodness’ of people’s hearts because they want to ‘spoil’ their birds. They do not realize that they

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## Caution in Using Fenbendazole

Gwen Flinchum, DVM  
Lake Worth, Florida

We have had problems in cockatiels with resistance of giardia to metronidazole and carnidazole. I tried fenbendazole (1 drop per day for 2 consecutive days, then recheck 10 days later and retreat if needed), and, although it appeared to work well, I found an adverse reaction reference that stated, "It affects feather growth in young birds." In my experience with young cockatiels, their feathers actually fell out! So I would advise not to use it.

(Ed note: Dr. Teresa Lightfoot is advising colleagues of numerous anecdotal reports of illness and subsequent death in some cockatiels treated for refractory giardiasis with fenbendazole, even though it has a generally wide safety margin in other species. Limited histopathology indicates that hepatic pathology may be involved. Most cases reported have involved the administration of more than one dosage.)

## Preanesthetic Drugs Overcome Shortcomings of Isoflurane

Donald Zantop, DVM,  
Dipl ABVP-Avian Practice  
Fallston, Maryland

Using a combination of butorphanol tartrate (1 mg/kg), ketamine hydrochloride (3 mg/kg) and medetomidine (Domitor®-Pfizer @ 40 µg/kg) has overcome some shortcomings of isoflurane anesthesia alone in companion and other bird

# Practice TIPS



species. For birds 100 g and smaller, I dilute the ketamine and medetomidine to safely administer. In larger birds the drugs can be safely mixed in the same syringe.

With this combination of agents, I have found the level of isoflurane can be reduced by 30-40%.

Birds breathe more deeply, even when undergoing long procedures where they typically revert to shallow breathing. I no longer resort to administering anesthesia

through air sac canulas for long term procedures in order to provide constant positive pressure ventilation. It appears that birds tend to preserve their body tempera-

ture to a greater degree with this combination. If the procedure is less than 20 minutes, atipamezole

(same volume as medetomidine) can be given for rapid recovery.

In Galliformes and Anseriformes, typical anesthesia with isoflurane alone was

associated with long periods of apnea and even death, whereas with this combination of agents, respiration is smooth and recovery is calm.

For ducks and geese, I increase the dose of medetomidine to 60 µg/kg. For chickens, the dose of medetomidine is 60-80 µg/kg, and the dose of ketamine is 4-5 mg/kg. I have used the combo on various species of owls, hawks, and vultures with no problems.

The medetomidine does result in a bradycardia that can be disconcerting, but since this is physiologic and related to very good central arterial pressure, it is nothing to worry about. I usually monitor the birds with a Parks Doppler Blood Flow Monitor placed over the carotid arteries in the neck and can actually hear the blood flow to the brain. During surgery the increased central pressure will contribute to hemorrhage so strict attention to hemostasis is necessary.

In my hands, at these doses, this is strictly a preanesthetic protocol. It is not suitable for minor surgical procedures or restraint for radiographs without the addition of isoflurane. Although once given, a lot of these birds are asleep on their feet, they can be aroused. At recovery they tend to once again sleep on their feet for some period (up to 2 hours) but they can perch and be roused. The butorphanol and medetomidine are both analgesic and work on different areas to help them deal with pain.

# Notes from ...

## THE 5<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL EUROPEAN AAV CONFERENCE

**Pisa, Italy**

**May, 1999**



### Medetomidine as a Sedating Agent

Peter Sandmeier, DVM, Dipl ECAMS  
Daettwil, Switzerland

In mammals, medetomidine causes reliable sedation and can be quickly and smoothly antagonized by atipamezole, allowing smooth recovery. Doses up to 1 mg/kg of medetomidine reportedly do not immobilize avian species. In this study, the sedative and cardiopulmonary effects of medetomidine administered IM was evaluated in two dosage groups (1.5 mg/kg and 2 mg/kg) of four domestic pigeons each and two dosage groups (1.5 mg/kg and 2 mg/kg) of two yellow-crowned Amazons each.

It was found that, although medetomidine does have a sedative effect and can be reliably antagonized, it does not reliably induce a desirable level of sedation at the high doses investigated and cannot therefore be recommended for routine use in avian practice.

(Ed note: As discussed by Dr. Zantop on page 2, the best use of medetomidine in birds appears to

be as a preanesthetic to enhance the use of isoflurane.)

### Multiple Uses of Hyaluronidase

Teresa Lightfoot, DVM  
Dipl ABVP-Avian  
Largo, Florida

Hyaluronidase (Wydase®) enhances the speed and efficiency of subcutaneous fluid absorption in birds as it does in dogs and cats. For birds, we use 150 USP units per liter fluids (1.0 ml of the 150 USP U/ml solution of the lyophilized suspension). Some other uses of hyaluronidase include:

- adding to nasal and sinus flushes to dissolve inspissated material (at 10X the concentration used for SC fluids).
- adding to nebulization fluids (at the same dosage as nasal flushes) in birds with lower respiratory tract infections as well as in reptiles with pneumonia.
- intravenous administration in conditions such as egg yolk stroke, when ectopic protein in the blood stream may cause vascular irritation or occlusion.

- adding it to the chemotherapeutic of choice for flushing cutaneous abscesses in reptiles.
- maintaining patency of abdominal breathing tubes.

The safety factor of this medication is high. A dose of 700 times the recommended amount has been given IV inadvertently to a person with no adverse reactions.

### Allergen Testing in Self-mutilating Psittaciformes

Patricia Macwhirter, DVM  
Burwood, Victoria, Australia

In conjunction with a veterinary dermatologist, intradermal skin testing was performed in 38 Psittaciformes showing clinical evidence of self-mutilation and in 41 normal birds: 89% of the self-mutilating birds showed wheal reactions to one or more allergens compared with only 2% normal birds.

The most common allergen reactions in self-mutilators were sunflower (39%); house dust mites, *D. pteronyssinus* (26%); grain miller's mites,

*D. farinae* (18%); and maize (corn) (17%). Some birds with positive reactions showed clinical improvement following avoidance, vaccine or anti-allergy medical therapies but 18% showed no change or minimal improvement even though owner compliance with therapy was good.

While some results are promising, additional strictly controlled studies will be required to determine the usefulness of intradermal skin testing and anti-allergy therapies in self-mutilating birds.

(Ed note: Harrison's Adult Lifetime Mash is an avoidance diet model because it is free of corn and sunflower seeds and has helped in cases where a sensitivity to such products is suspect. For small birds, it is fed as is; for big birds, fruit juice can be used to soak the mash overnight and make balls to feed. We would be interested to hear of any results using the Adult Lifetime Mash as an avoidance diet in feather pickers or mutilators. Send comments to Avian Examiner, Harrison's Bird Foods, 220 Congress Park Drive Suite 232, Delray Beach, FL 33445 or email us at BirdFoods@aol.com.



## Tips from Pigeon Breeders

Jan Hooimeijer, DVM  
Meppel, The Netherlands

In parrot aviculture, every attempt is made to save every hatchling or individual bird, no matter how weak or severely ill they become. There is some question about how this action may contribute to a potentially weakened gene pool. Perhaps some practices of pigeon breeders can be critically evaluated and adapted to parrots.

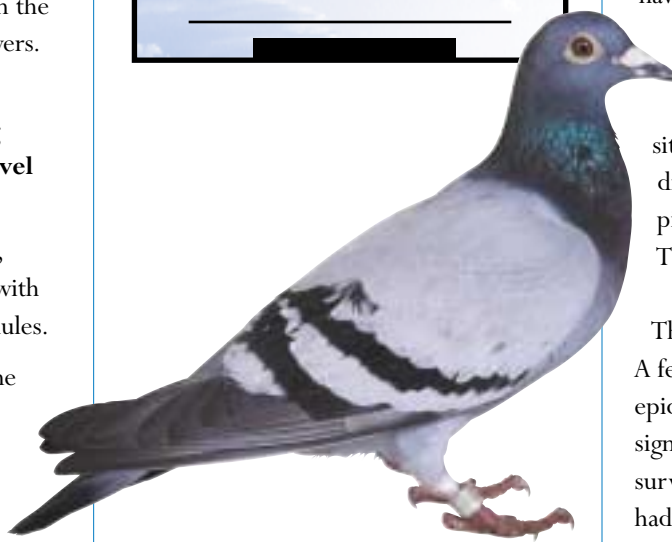
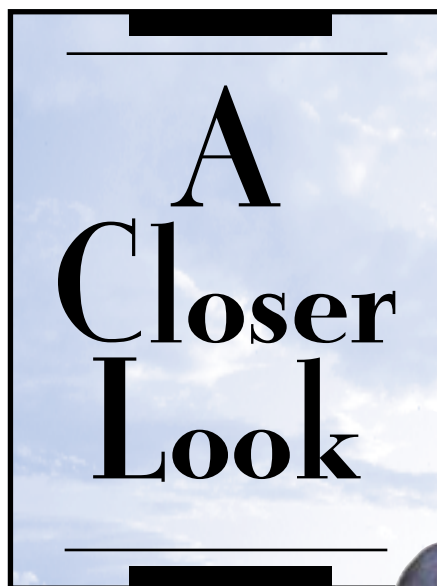


By necessity, if a racing pigeon expects to win, it must be extremely healthy. If a pigeon is vulnerable to infectious disease, the bird will get lost or die and the pigeon fancier has to go on with his survivors. Although the birds mingle at a race, when they come home, they are isolated for a short period, and life goes on uninterrupted. If such a bird gets sick, it is not treated but eliminated from the flock, even if it spontaneously recovers.

### Factors influencing how racing pigeon breeders achieve this level of health in their stock:

- Rigid housing standards offer sun, exercise, fresh air and rain along with shelter and regular cleaning schedules.
- Weak birds are culled, and only the strongest birds are chosen for breeding.
- Properly selected and properly managed birds are fed a high quality food.
- Management practices are generally improved every year.
- Available viral vaccines are used in the flock.

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**Disease-causing organisms  
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and insecticides.**  
.....



With this kind of management, the breeder is able to produce strong birds that are resistant to the common aviculture problems others work so hard to avoid by isolation. Disease-causing organisms, such as *E. coli*, *Proteus*, *Pseudomonas*, *Candida*, parasites and even chlamydia, can be relegated to a level of insignificance without the use of antibiotics, antifungals, parasiticides and insecticides.



Another interesting factor is that nearly every week, a free-flying pigeon owned by someone else comes into their loft. The bird is housed separately as soon as it is discovered, although the new bird may have spent the entire day in the loft. But because racing pigeons have this natural genetic selection criteria and are very strong and healthy, the situation is not alarming. Any new viral diseases among pigeons just kill those pigeons that do not fit into the system. Those that survive will be stronger.

These principles apply to other animals. A few years ago there was a large viral epidemic in seals of the North Sea with significant die-offs. The strong seals survived, and a couple of years later, they had more babies born than before the epidemic. The overall population of strong seals has increased. They were fortunate that all those sick seals were not treated, because they would have survived and the resulting genetic makeup would not be as strong.



## HBD Staff Members

Edward Callahan and Jean Coffinberry are now part of the HBD International family at the Delray Beach Office. Other staff members whom you may already know by voice are Teryl Zurn and Emily Hunt. Teresa Spier is responsible for quality control, and lives in Pawnee City, Nebraska.



Edward Callahan and Jean Coffinberry



Emily Hunt and Teryl Zurn



## New Packaging Extends Shelf Life

In a breakthrough move to significantly extend the shelf life of the entire HBD product line, a transition is being made to new, oxygen-impermeable, resealable bags. The new packaging will be officially introduced at the 1999 AAV Conference in New Orleans.

With the new packaging, HBD can extend the length of high quality freshness.



## From the HOME OFFICE

**TANYA HARRISON COFFINBERRY**  
Vice-president  
HBD, International, Inc.



Tanya Harrison, Vice-president of HBD International and primary representative of Harrison's Bird Foods at veterinary conferences, is now Tanya Harrison Coffinberry. She and Jean Paul Coffinberry were married on October 31, 1998.

## Avian Caregiver Available for Your Clients

Copies of HBD's *The Avian Examiner*, which promotes the use of avian veterinarians to your client, are available for distribution. For more information, contact the HBD Office at 800-346-0269.

## Do YOU Have Your Own Web Page Yet?

The HBD Online Store is up and running with individual clinic web sites for distributors of Harrison's Bird Foods. This is an innovative way for veterinarians to make HBD products available to their clients online, and to collect a commission for each bag sold.



The information provided by the clinics was entered into the web page format. It is important that each clinic go online and proofread their own site at [www.harrisonsbirdfoods.com/locate/index.htm](http://www.harrisonsbirdfoods.com/locate/index.htm).

### If a distributor wants to:

- correct errors on the clinic web site
- update information on web site
- suggest minor changes to be made
- ask questions about the HBD Online Store
- report how the web site has impacted their practice and the promotion and sale of Harrison's Bird Foods, or
- sign up for this exciting new marketing tool ...

contact Jean Coffinberry (HBD office 800-346-0269 or email to [wildwngs@aol.com](mailto:wildwngs@aol.com)).

## Recycling HBD Bags

HBD cloth bags will soon be a collector's item. In the meantime, Matthias Janeczek, 4-year-old son of Dr. Friedrich and Monika Janeczek (Avifood, Germany), wears HBD bags as part of his Mardi Gras costume.



# Using Harrison's



## Converting Canaries to Harrison's

Peter Coutteel, DVM  
Nijlen, Belgium

I recommend incorporating Harrison's as the primary diet for my canary breeders. For conversion, I suggest offering Harrison's in the normal food container and in the same place as usual during the daytime. I do not mix seeds and pellets in the first week.

Later, when they are used to eating pellets, we put the food containers outside the cage (hanging on the wire) so they have to put their head inside. They know there are only pellets in there; they do not waste much food because they have to take it one piece at a time.

One month before and during the breeding season, they are offered both pellets and mash. If they have youngsters, the first week they will feed almost exclusively mash, but after two weeks they suddenly start again to prefer the

pellets. During molt and over the winter period, they are offered only pellets.

Mash food is very quickly digested, so the crop of the youngsters will become empty overnight. For this reason some breeders will offer the parents normal egg food just before sunset so the chicks have enough bulk in their crop for the night.

## Green-winged Macaws Breeding Program

Donna Vickers  
Palm Springs, Florida

I have had excellent breeding results with my Green-winged Macaws by offering Harrison's High Potency Coarse year-round. The only supplements I give are two raw peanuts per bird per day and a small piece of a fruit one day and of a vegetable the next day.

These parents usually incubate three eggs until one chick hatches; then they try to hide or crack the remaining two eggs. I pull the last two eggs to finish the incubation, which usually takes only another 4-8 days. The parents raise their single baby until 4-6 weeks of age.

The hand-raised chicks are fed Harrison's Juvenile Formula and then all are weaned onto High Potency Formula. They continue to get two peanuts a day until they are sold. I usually raise 12 babies and then close the nest down until the next season.

## Greener is Better!

Due to improved efficiency by our manufacturing process involving the topical application of spirulina to extruded Harrison's nuggets, you may notice a slight color change of the HBD products. Hopefully, it will not cause any inconvenience in convincing your birds to eat food that looks a little bit different. Because in this case, your birds will actually be able to ingest more of the beneficial spirulina for more positive results!



## WE GET MAIL

### Recovering Finch

Adele Chun

After having my sick finch in the hospital for 5 days and undergoing vitamin injections, he was introduced to Harrison's High Potency Mash. At first he didn't care for it and now he's like a vacuum and just goes nuts for this stuff! And that makes me feel better.

My finch is gaining back his strength and his cracked beak has completely healed; his feathers are growing back around his beak, his feet are not as dry and scaly and his appetite has skyrocketed.

### Good-looking Birds

Teresa Miller

My cockatiels, budgies and parrotlet are on Harrison's pellets and I am convinced they are the best food for my birds.

I have a normal grey cockatiel that was diagnosed with liver disease before he was

one year old. My vet told me to convert him to the Harrison's High Potency. Not only has it given him more of the nutrients he's needed, it helped his feathers go from a black, oily look to the normal color, and he's soft and filled out.

I like the fact those pellets are organic so I know I'm not giving him anything he doesn't need. When I see other birds who are on a seed diet, there is no doubt my birds' overall appearance is better due to the diet.

### Improved Hahn's Macaws

Bonnie Jackson

I had one Hahn's Macaw when I learned about Harrison's — he weaned himself to it in only one day. Once he molted, his feathers came in beautiful. I just acquired two more Hahn's, which were neglected and fed poorly in a pet store. When I got them, they would lunge at me and try to attack me. Now, after three weeks on Harrison's I can see a big difference in their behavior.

# Let Your Practice SOAR

## The Transition of Max to HBD

Mary M Wolynski CVT  
Lake Worth, Florida

Some birds that initially resist conversion to a new diet may require persistence and an in-hospital program.

The diet of Max, a 13-year-old Yellow-lored Amazon, consisted of a vita-seed mix, broccoli, red bell pepper, sweet potato, squash, grapes, celery, apple, cheese, and a powdered vitamin. But Max had definite signs of malnutrition: brown

feathers, overgrown beak and nails, balding on the bottoms of both feet, grade 2 and 3 bum-blefoot, green urine and feces, and very yellow urates.

Max was admitted to the hospital for observation and tube-feeding after he refused to eat following a beak trim. For one week Max was tube fed Juvenile Hand-feeding Formula (JHF) three times a day. Six days later when Max began to eat safflower seed, his owner decided to leave Max for diet conversion to Harrison's High Potency Coarse (HPC).

I removed everything from his cage and offered Max only HPC and water. Max's owner said that Max did not like change. I began by offering Max a few pieces of HPC in the same dish and continued tube-feeding JHF formula three times a day. By day five Max had a piece of HPC in his

mouth, and later I found crumbled pieces on the cage bottom. I found this encouraging; we were making progress. On day six Max's urine was clear and his feces consistent. I dropped his tube-feeding to one time per day.

On day eight I stopped all tube-feeding, and on day twelve, Max was sent home with specific feeding instructions of offering only HPC for a minimum of six weeks.

I find that when we keep a bird for diet conversion it's much harder on the owner than the bird. I do my best to reassure the owner and speak to them daily on the phone. One afternoon I came in to find Max not eating at all, and realized someone had offered him High Potency Fine instead of High Potency Coarse. After changing the food, Max happily resumed eating.

*Continued from page 1*

are spoiling their bird's health. This is what the veterinarians see. This is why they give that advice. There are way too many times that this advice is an improvement over what the birds have been fed and the advice should be taken in context. They are not looking at the sampling of bird owners that are representative of this list. THEY are looking at a whole different set. While it would be nice to send everyone who owns a bird to nutrition classes a vet knows that only the shortest most simple instructions have a prayer of being followed by the most people. Vets aren't out just to sell pellets; they carry the pellets (which is a pain for most of them) because they care about the birds. They recommend people feeding mostly pellets because they don't want the bird eating only the seed and french fries and corn that might be the 'fresh vegetables, table food, and a little seed' that many people describe their birds as eating. The vet can't go home with people and watch over their shoulders and tell them 'no, you can't substitute more apples for the carrots and sweet potatoes.' Give the vets a break, we should be kissing their feet for putting up with us bird people."

Dianalee Deter  
paradisefound@juno.com



## INDUSTRY NEWS

Pesticides continue to be a pervasive threat to California's ecosystems according to a report released by Pesticide Action Network North American (PANNA).

Multiple pesticides are often found in California waters and sediments at concentrations that exceed levels that are lethal to zooplankton, the main food source of young fish.

Most species of fish and zooplankton in the San Francisco Bay Delta estuary have

experienced dramatic population declines in the last 25 years. Toxic contaminants, especially pesticides, are known to be one of the factors contributing to these declines.

The pesticides carbofuran and diazinon are responsible for the majority of bird kills in California, affecting many species of songbird, waterfowl and raptors.

Studies have shown that when carbofuran is applied to crops as many as 17 birds die for every five acres treated.



The report concludes with a chapter called "Restoring the Balance," which provides a brief overview of ecologically-based pest management strategies that represent a long-term sustainable solution to controlling pests without using toxic chemicals.

The report is available at [www.panna.org](http://www.panna.org).

From: PANUPS (Pesticide Action Network North America) updates by email. To subscribe to PANUPS, send email to [majordomo@igc.org](mailto:majordomo@igc.org) with the following text on one line:   
subscribe panups



## The Results Speak for Themselves



Miechele McCoy's eclectus parrot, Chloe, from Bloomington, Indiana before converting to Harrison's Bird Foods and only four months after the diet change.

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### 1999 AAV Conference

You are invited to attend the annual  
**"Chat with HBD"**  
in New Orleans

**Thursday, Sept. 2, 1999**  
**7:00-10:00 p.m.**

Hosted by  
**Greg J. Harrison**  
DVM, Dipl. ABVP-Avian

#### Discussion topics will include:

- ✿ New Packaging
- ✿ HBD Online Stores
- ✿ New Uses for HBD Products
- ✿ Magnetic Therapy
- ✿ More Alternative Therapies
- ✿ Q & A, and of course,

**Good Food!**

*HBD's Avian Examiner is brought to you as a service of HBD International, Inc., manufacturer and distributor of Harrison's Bird Foods. This publication is part of HBD's commitment to building avian practice through education and nutritionally sound diets. Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information presented herein (particularly drug doses), it is the responsibility of the clinician to critically evaluate the contents, to stay informed of pharmacokinetic information and to observe recommendations provided in the manufacturers' inserts. Reader responses, comments and suggestions are encouraged. Please mail to Avian Examiner Publications, 5700 Lake Worth Road, Suite 107, Lake Worth, FL 33463 or fax to 561-641-0234.*

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