



ORNITHO

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β -carotene: natural provitamin A for better condition

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Hypovitaminosis A (vitamin A deficiency) is a frequently occurring dietary deficiency in cage and aviary birds. Seeds in themselves only contain only little vitamin A and this also breaks down quickly during storage. For that reason the correct amount of vitamin A should be added to a balanced diet.

Vitamin A deficiency in birds causes lowered immunity, poor plumage, reduced appetite and damage to the mucous membranes resulting in higher susceptibility to respiratory infections. Infected sinuses, swollen salivary glands or aspergillosis (fungus in the air sac) are seen quite commonly as a result of vitamin A deficiency. Many respiratory infections, linked to laboured and squeaky breathing (e.g. in bullfinches), are the result of a vitamin A deficiency in the diet.

Pellets for birds are a complete food and contain sufficient vitamin A. But the dietary requirements can also be provided with egg food and/or vitamin supplements. However vitamin A is a fat-soluble vitamin that is stored in the body and can cause damaging effects in the event of overdosage. Recent scientific studies have shown in this way that excessive levels of vitamin A are harmful for the condition. Too much vitamin A amongst others results in lowered immunity, poorer breeding results, aggression and an altered voice. High vitamin A levels might also contribute to the development of hemochromatosis in fruit and insect eating birds.

In plants, vitamin A appears specifically in the form of carotenoids, a type of provitamin A, that is converted into vitamin A in the bird's body. The likelihood of an overdose is reduced by providing these carotenoids from which the bird can itself create vitamin A according to its needs. The bird determines itself how much provitamin it requires to obtain the required amount of vitamin A.



NutriBird

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Moreover a lot of studies show that carotenoids increase resistance to disease. The administration of β -carotene stimulates the formation of specific antibodies (immunoglobulins) and white blood cells and thereby supports the immune system. Their activity as a biological anti-oxidant also give carotenoids a protective function for the cells in the body. In some studies the replacement of vitamin A by β -carotene also gave a significant improvement in breeding results.

Due to these new scientific insights the nutritionists at Versele-Laga decided to replace part of the vitamin A in the majority of the feeds with β -carotene. This is both for the **NutriBird pellets and hand rearing food** and for **Orlux eggfood and patées**.

Carotenoids however form the basis for the yellow and red colouring in canaries.



Squeaky breathing is a frequent problem in bullfinches.

In order to prevent any undesirable colouration of the plumage of coloured canaries, no β -carotene is added to the canary foods. The basic colouring in the plumage of other birds, parrots and parakeets is of a different type. Those colorants are not influenced by the addition of carotenoids to the food, so that the colour of these birds does not change in the presence of higher quantities of β -carotene.



Infected sinuses frequently occur in parakeets and parrots and are almost always caused by Vitamin A deficiency

Teach young birds to eat pellets

Dr. P. Ghysels

In 1994 Versele-Laga was the first European company to market a complete bird food in the form of pellets under the name NutriBird.

Scientists no longer need to be convinced that feeding with extruded pellets only offers benefits from a nutritional angle. Many prominent bird breeders have already switched to pellet food and thereby achieved magnificent breeding results. In order to prevent frequently seen nutritional disorders such as calcium deficiency, vitamin deficiency, obesity, gout, etc., the majority of specialised bird veterinarians advise their clients to switch their birds to a complete extruded food.

When the bird keeper is convinced that this feeding method also offers a lot of benefits to him, one more obstacle must be crossed, namely switching over. Switching over successfully depends greatly on the



motivation of the bird keeper. A bird keeper who is not convinced of the benefits of a complete pellet food will have a lot more difficulties in switching over. The perseverance of the bird keeper will define the final success of the switchover.

In the past, various methods were proposed to ensure a successful switchover. In recent years the NutriBird Alternate Day Method is used for switching over without a hitch. This method can be studied in detail at our website www.versele-laga.com or in the NutriBird catalogue, which can be ordered using the voucher below.

However, getting young birds used to NutriBird is much simpler than trying to switch an adult bird over to it. Young birds will adjust more quickly to the new food. They are curious, will examine the food bit by bit, taste it and will learn to eat the pellets in this way while playing. For that reason we recommend adding a large portion of pellets to the daily egg food from weaning. The humidity of the egg food will make the pellets a little softer and the young birds will eat it without any problem. If you simultaneously limit the number of seeds, everything will proceed even faster.

'Seeing eating teaches eating' is also true for young birds. The presence of a few birds that are already used to NutriBird, can speed up the switch. By teaching all your birds to eat pellets at a young age, you will gradually develop a flock that is used to NutriBird pellets. Your birds' health will certainly benefit from it.

'As a vet I can say that the main problems in birds are caused by nutritional mistakes. My birds used only to be given a seed blend, supplemented with fruit and vegetables. The birds could choose and as a result the food became much too one-sided. By feeding NutriBird that has become much simpler and my breeding results are excellent.'

Dr. J. Vandercruyssen - Oosterzele (B)



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Captive bred chaffinch convincingly wins the Belgian Championship



Raphaël Decock and Patrick Bogaerts (Promoter Versele-Laga bird products) with the magnificent trophy of the Belgian Championship AVIBO.

Raphaël Decock from Lichtervelde won the highest award at the Belgian Championship AVIBO in Heestert (B) on 24.06.2007 with his chaffinch Mutten. Mutten sang the right 'suskeweet' song 1,124 times in one hour and was the best of the 1,343 participants by a long way. There was only one bird this year that passed the limit of 1,000 songs. This first prize was certainly no surprise to Raphaël Decock, but may be called historic. Mutten is after all the first captive bred bird that can add this title to its record. He had already proven his talents by taking 3rd place in 2005 and 2nd place in 2006 at this Belgian Championship AVIBO. A well-earned winner then and also a great successor to Basiel from Sandra Soenen who won the title for the last 3 years.

Raphaël Decock has only taken part in singing competitions over the last 10 years. With his busy professional activities in his agricultural business he did not have enough time in the past and only bred the birds. Raphaël breeds around 10 young chaffinches each year in his large aviaries and as a result he has his own very strong finch strain. The five best birds take part each year in the singing contests and do so with great success. From early May the birds gradually develop their condition to achieve their peak by the end of June. Only in this way is it possible to achieve such a fantastic victory at the Belgian Championship. These competition birds are separated as far as possible from the breeding birds to prevent interaction between both.

A diet of **Prestige Triumph chaffinch mixture** has been used for years. The diet is supplemented with a softfood based on **Orlux Eggfood for European finches** and **Insect Patée Premium**, to which a few wild seeds, crushed walnuts and sunflower seeds are added. Extremely good breeding results are thereby realised each year.



Melis & Christakis Charalambides, Nicosia (Cyprus)

Attracting attention



Farma Ara, Bosovice (Czech Republic)

Breeders of:

Parrots, parakeets and ornamental fowl

Parrots

Special merits:

They work as chairman and treasurer of 'Birdlife Cyprus', which has been active for many years in the protection of threatened migrating birds in Cyprus. The best proof that breeding birds can be combined with protecting birds in nature.

Speciality:

Professional parrot breeding centre in full expansion: 200 aviaries by the end of 2007

Their favourites:

- Orlux eggfood
- NutriBird hand rearing food

- Orlux eggfood large parakeets & parrots
- Prestige Premium Loro Parque mixtures
- Prestige Exotic Fruit Mix
- NutriBird hand rearing food