

Seeds We Find In Our Mixtures – Terry Tuxford, UK

[Terry Tuxford](#) | Nov 11, 2012 | [Comments 4](#) | [Printable version](#)

There are a variety of budgerigar seed mixes on the market for us to use, or we can buy straight seeds and mix our own. Over the years there has been a changing view as to the ideal mix for our budgerigars. One thing that we do know is that seed never gets any cheaper and it is therefore important that we minimise our waste. The obvious way to do this is through observation and watching which seeds our birds eat and which are discarded and then balance our mixtures accordingly.

Here is information on the various seeds we have available to us.

Energy Sources

Carbohydrates are the main energy source provided through the breakdown of sugars and starch. Many budgerigars gorge themselves on carbohydrates such as canary seed, buckwheat, millets and oats.



Canary Seed

This tiny grass seed is very popular with budgerigars and usually constitutes at least 50% of their basic seed mixture. It has a pale, shiny surface, but a much darker kernel. It is grown in many parts of the world including Canada, Australia and in small quantities in the UK.



Buckwheat

This is a cereal grain, cultivated in large quantities in the USA and Canada, buckwheat is now included in quality seed mixtures that fall under the small parakeet category by suppliers in the UK. It is a tri-cornered seed that is high in carbohydrates.



Oats (Groats)

This grain has been a tremendous source of nutrition for farm animals and horses for years. It is a universally used seed with a distinctive shape; groats being the product after its double-layered hull has been removed. Oval on one side with a long depression on the other, the kernel is soft and powdery-white with a high energy value and is a nutritional must in small quantities. In years past many budgerigar breeders fed their breeding pairs on small quantities of soaked oats.



Millets

These can be either in sprays or in bags. Millet sprays are a firm favourite amongst budgerigars and the birds will wait in anticipation if they form a regular part of their diet.

Millets are the smallest of all seeds and are a favourite of most birds. They are harvested from grass-like plants, which are cultivated in many countries throughout the world. In the UK, mixed mixtures with four or five different kinds are available.



Available Millets include white, yellow, panicum, red and Japanese millets. In appearance, white and panicum can be difficult to separate, but the difference is that white millet is twice the size of panicum and paler in appearance. Yellow looks like a yellow coloured white millet and Red millet also is equal in size to white millet. The Japanese is light brown in colour, very small and appears to be crinkly.

Protein Sources

For protein value we have sunflower, hemp, niger, linseed and rape which, although high in fat oils, also contain small quantities of carbohydrates and a very small mineral value.



Linseed

A small, oval-shaped seed with a flat, shiny surface and is available in a tan and golden colour. Linseed is usually included in a diet for smaller birds such as finches and canaries. It is unlikely to be found in a budgerigar prepared mixture, other than in Tonic Seed. Despite its size it is probably the most effectively balanced seed. It makes more sense to offer small birds small seeds that provide the nutrients they need, rather than expecting them to manipulate seed like sunflower, which provides a similar food value.

Aviary-housed breeding pairs gain most from linseed and budgerigars instinctively know when to eat seeds containing fat oils; especially when the weather is cold. It offers great benefits for egg production and subsequent feeding when rearing a brood of youngsters. Outside of these two important calendar periods, linseed should be withdrawn. However, I am not convinced that budgerigars eat this seed.



Niger

Niger is a small dark seed that contains a high fat oil value. It also has a significant amount of protein and carbohydrate, but like all these seeds in this section it is low in mineral value. It is small, narrow and straight and varies in length and can appear to be black in colour. However, it is more of a dark grey and should not be confused with mouse droppings!

A more serious concern about niger is that broken seed left lying on the floor of the cage or flight can quickly become rancid, especially if in contact with other foods such as green-food, causing mould to build up. The secret is to place the niger in food pots and make sure the floor surface is clean and dry. Leave it in place for a few days and then remove any spillage.



Rape

Rape is in red and black and both forms look very much alike. This seed is small and round, but bigger than millet. Red rape can be difficult to distinguish from black rape when mixed together, but when separated the red rape millet is a more maroon colour. Both these seeds are normally included in mixtures intended for finches and canaries, but do offer it to your budgerigars. They might show no interest at first, but given time it can become welcome – especially during the breeding season. Its fat oil content is particularly high.



Hemp

Hemp is often included in small parakeet mixtures and is a small round seed that is grey/brown in colour. It is another high fat oil seed, similar toniger, with perhaps a lower mineral content.



Sunflower

This is the easiest of all seeds to recognise because of its size and variety of colour. It is available in black, white and striped, and either large or small. It dwarfs the remaining seed in a normal millet based mixture. Despite being enjoyed by budgerigars, it is not regarded as a well-balanced, seed. Proteins and fats are present, but it is low in carbohydrates which must be found from other seeds.



Safflower

Similar in appearance to sunflower, safflower is a smaller, white seed. There are mixed opinions about its popularity for budgerigars, although some birds develop a craving for it at certain times of the year.

<http://www.budgerigarworld.com/seeds-we-find-in-our-mixtures-terry-tuxford-uk/>

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