



Wild Bird Trading Co.

Your backyard feeding specialist.

Avoiding Poor Grade Seed

Mould

A powder like appearance on the surface of bird feed grains will identify mould. Mould generally occurs when the seed is poorly stored, heated and condensed, moistened or contaminated with mould. It is nearly certain that no birds will eat mouldy bird seed. Mould will spread through your seed supply rapidly after contamination. Many discounters will sell mouldy seed as it is much cheaper but there is always a reason why discount seed costs less to buy.

Dust

Powder created during processing creates dust which, if not removed, becomes an expensive by-product that you pay for and the birds reject. Beware; some manufacturers print a band of ink around the bottom and on the face of their bags to hide excessive dust.

Note: sometimes seed appears to be mouldy and dusty. This could be very small insects called mites. They spread rapidly and can be a real nuisance.

Oil

Some manufacturers of bird feed will add oil to bird feed to reduce the appearance of dust. The oil sticks to the seeds and the dust sticks to the oily surface thus disguising the dust content. Oils are considered to be nutritionally questionable to the good health of your backyard friends. Oil can be identified by a grey colour in normally white safflower seeds and by an unusually shiny appearance to all seeds. Oils also provide unnecessary weight to each bag of seed so you get less seed per pound.

Wheat/Wheat Screenings

Wheat and wheat screenings are used as a base and/or filler in cheaper bird mixes. Generally, no birds are very attracted to this ingredient and therefore, this portion of the mix is an unnecessary expense. You may get some game birds and pigeons when offering wheat.

Insects

Like most food products, insects can be attracted to bird seed. Meal moth is common and can be controlled using special non-toxic traps and cool dry storage. Some manufacturers do not control for insects at all.

Immature, Flat Appearing Sunflowers (screenings)

There is usually little or no meat inside these immature shells known as "blanks". These sunflowers are known as "screenings" in the feed industry. They are very inexpensive to buy and appear deceptively similar to useable seeds. If you are offered cheap sunflowers, or mixed seed with sunflowers, be sure to look closely for long and flat shells and you will know that those are useless seeds.

Foreign Objects

In an effort to keep some mixes cheap, it is not unusual to discover non-edible objects in a bag of bird seed such as dirt, sticks and screenings. Occasionally all bird feed will have a stem or leaf but you can inspect clear bagged seed to be sure.

Cracked Corn vs. Cut Corn

Although corn is a good ingredient, cracked corn involves a process that makes the seed dustier and less attractive. Steel cut corn is a better alternative. Cracked corn is identified by its crushed appearance. Steel cut corn assures less likelihood of toxins as well. It should be said that corn is one of the better ingredients for feeding the birds. It is a myth that corn is a filler, but it is less expensive than other good ingredients so go ahead and get the mix with corn. Corn is particularly good in cold climates where high carbohydrates are necessary for heat production.

Frost Damage

Identified by a red colour in sunflower shells, frost damage during the growing season will render sunflowers useless as bird feed. A slight red tinge on the shell is okay but if the red penetrates to the kernel then the grain is spoiled. Thus cheap sunflower seed should be inspected for frost damage.

Milo

Another commonly used filler is milo also known as sorghum. Interestingly, this grain is sold to farmers with the feature that birds do not like it so they will have a larger crop. It is an inexpensive ingredient and it is almost always found in poor grade seed.



Filler -wheat



Filler known as Milo