

Why would a bird that is weaned and healthy, suddenly die just a few days after going to a new home?

According to a blog I read by a lady that bred and handfed some of the first parrotlets in this country in the 1980's, as well as having written the Barron's "*The Parrotlet Handbook*", it is due to the inexperience of the person buying the bird. She said that many people make too many changes too fast and the parrotlets can't handle the added stress. This happened with a couple of my babies last year, and this was my thought as well, but it was nice to read it from someone that has been working with parrotlets for decades longer than I have.

None of my babies leave until they have been off formula for a good week, and eating and doing well on their own. The blog-writer above said the same. She also said she strongly recommends feeding millet almost non-stop when the babies first go home. The bird will NOT become addicted to millet, but millet is a complex carbohydrate that also contains protein. So millet provides quick energy as well as sustained energy because of the complex carbohydrate and protein combination. Young parrotlets may eat an entire millet spray daily for the first week or two. This gives them the quick energy they need to adjust to the stress and energy levels they are expending. A new home is stressful, no matter how tame the bird may be. Everything is different. They've left behind their clutchmates and must adapt to a new home, new sounds, new people, and new routine. All of this takes a lot of energy, and unlimited quantities of millet will help provide the energy they need.

As time goes on, they will begin adding things to their diet, including fruits, veggies, and pellets, as well as a regular seed mix. Variety is great and contributes to a long healthy life, but initially it is more important that they have unlimited access to complex carbohydrates and protein, neither of which is found in fresh foods. They have plenty of time to expand their diet, but of critical importance is that they are able to safely adapt to the new home.

So along with their seed mix, be sure to provide several millet sprays in the cage at all times. Place them near perches, for easy access. The bird needs to see them easily and reach them easily. I would still provide a dish with some pellets and another with the seed mix (I like the Higgins Safflower Gold for cockatiels best for them), and also hang a treat stick in addition to the multiple millet sprays. Then make sure the bird has enough time in the cage to eat. While you don't want to bring him home and just lock him in the cage for two weeks, you do need to be careful to leave him plenty of time to eat and rest. Remember he's just a baby!