

## BIRD SEED FUTURES

Wayne Hanley, Massachusetts Audubon Society

The current famine in Africa will hit U.S. birds rather hard next winter. At this point in summer, it would appear that wild bird feed mixtures will cost about 50 percent more next winter than they did last winter.

A few specialty seeds may be unobtainable. Thistle seed, for instance, will be scarce. The thistle seed available next winter already is in the United States. Ethiopia, which produces the seed, has placed an embargo on all shipments. The seed is being pressed for edible oils, needed to combat famine in that nation.

Sunflower seeds are pressed for margarine. With a reduced African crop on the market, manufacturers will bid up the price on domestic sunflower seeds in buying to fill their needs.

Peanut hearts, which several years ago were thrown away but later became an ingredient of wild bird feed mixtures, will be difficult to obtain. Much of the peanut-based cooking oils now come from peanut hearts.

That old standby, millet--the little round seeds in most bird feed mixtures--seems to be in good supply. The main domestic millet source is the Dakotas and the crop appears to be good. A little more expensive, of course, but ample.

Hemp seed has tripled in price. Buckwheat, that favorite of Mourning Doves, also has tripled. The buckwheat price has been affected by the floods last year in the Mississippi Valley which wiped out much of the crop.

In addition to the scarcity of some seeds, the general economic situation has affected bird feed prices. Inflation, of course, catches grower and buyer alike. At the same time, freight rates and surcharges are rising, and the ingredients of bird feed mixtures usually make the long trip from west to east in carload lots.

Another factor which may affect the availability of all feed, including corn, is a freight car shortage that reaches a climax around Chicago. Freight cars are now so busy hauling raw materials toward the Pacific and Japan that shipments through Chicago to the East Coast are often delayed three weeks or more. The situation could make bird feed supplies spotty.



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Andrew Harding Lane  
Chatham, Mass.

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WRITE - BOX 3 W.CHATHAM, 02669