

# Wild Bird Suet



## Cost Considerations

Oregon Suet Block™ is costly. The ingredients and processing are responsible.

It can cost two or three times the price of other suet products, and it is worth it. The nutrition is superior and the hard suet makes it last three or four times as long as the softer products, making it a good value.

## A Unique Product

I've made and sold the best woodpecker food on the market for a long time. The following is not your typical marketing piece. It is my opinion. It is about what I think suet ought to be based upon, my twenty-five plus years making and selling Oregon Suet Block and its companion products.

I make Oregon Suet Block™ for insectivorous birds, primarily woodpeckers. I think it is the best suet product available as well as the simplest. It was the first wild bird food to intentionally incorporate insects into the formula when I brought it to market twenty-five years ago. I believe Oregon Suet Block™ is the oldest commercial suet product in continuous production.



Left, Oregon Suet Block™ Plugs, Skipios' initial product, developed twenty-five years ago...And still the best wild bird suet available.



Above (left & right), cutting master suet blocks to portion. Above (center), woodpeckers enjoying OSB. Woodpecker photo courtesy of Veronica Szewc.

## Why Choose Oregon Suet Block™

Suet bird food has got to be worth the peck. Birds at a feeder are under duress and are vulnerable to attack from many predators. In the amount of time that it takes the bird to land and peck it has to get a bite worth the effort. That said, the more concentrated and higher quality, the better the food is for the bird.

I use *Musca domestica*, the Common Housefly as my feeder insect component. This insect is nutritionally superior to meal worms, crickets and the other more widely used feeder insects. Some of the insects are added to the mixture whole, little nuggets for the birds to eat, and you to see. However, most of the insect material is finely ground and blended into the mix. While there is a

marketing advantage to having the insects visible, it is not really all that good for the bird. As I said above, there has to be strong impact for every bite. Ground insects, evenly distributed throughout the block, ensure that each bite has the nutrients that have real value to the bird.

### Differences in Suet/Tallow/Fat

The hardest suet is the most dense and, therefore, has the highest pay back in calories per gram. I use top quality suet that is rendered on site from fresh kidney suet "knobs" by boiling them in a water bath. The resulting rendered, clarified fat sets harder than other animal fats

naturally, without the use of hardeners that are often used to make tallow products firm enough for use. My suet is cast in seventy pound master blocks that are cut to portion size eliminating the commonly used paper or plastic forming boxes. The system of casting a master



15 lb. backyard suet block

block, from which the portion pieces are cut, is used because it allows proper suspension of the insect particles throughout the piece so the bird can get a bite of fly in every peck.

# Product Types



Above (left), freshly harvested pupae, ready for dehydration. Above (right), freshly harvested larvae ready for the dryer.

## **Suet blocks:**

There is only one that I know of and I make it, the original Oregon Suet Block™. It is so good that it has become the industry standard. Although I coined the use of the term "block" to differentiate my product, and trademarked it, it is now widely copied to associate high quality and justify greater prices, often for inferior products.

## **Suet Cakes:**

When I refer to suet cakes, I mean products made only with actual beef kidney suet knobs that have been rendered. High quality clarified suet sets very hard all by themselves.

## **Tallow Cakes:**

I spoke with one Northwest producer who claimed his usage of the term "suet" for his product was legitimate because the mixed rendered fat, known as tallow, that he uses contains "almost 12% real suet". Tallow is a mixture

of all of the fats of the animal. Often the commercial tallows available are from several animal species and multiple processing locations. The material is hardened by hydrogenation or the addition of minerals.

## **Pelleted Blocks / Plugs / Cakes:**

There are several products that are more of a "pelleted" presentation rather than the usual block, plug or cake. I have little experience with these. They appear to simply be another way to present the ingredients similarly.

## **"Grease Cakes:"**

This is a term that once was used in the meat processing industry to refer to the whole wild bird food thing, somewhat disparagingly. I use it to refer to that group of "suet cake" products that are made of hardened vegetable oils. From what I have seen these are used by birdfeeder hosts who may be vegetarians and often don't approve of farmed feeder insects. Making a personal nutrition choice for a meatless diet is legitimate. Making that

choice in woodpecker food is something I don't approve of. It is my understanding that these products are made with partially hydrogenated oils. My guess is that the use of artificial trans fats in this case has to do with the much lower cost of the vegetable oils and fats. This application needs to be studied. Ashley Hayes, writing for CNN wrote 11-7-13, "The Food and Drug Administration on Thursday took a first step toward potentially eliminating most trans fat from the food supply, saying it has made a preliminary determination that a major source of trans fats -- partially hydrogenated oils -- are no



Above, a group of woodpeckers enjoys Oregon Suet Block™.

longer "generally recognized as safe." Though the problem takes a long time to show up in humans, that does not justify its use in the shorter-lived animals.

## Production

Our suet products are unique in our use of a cast and cut production system. Warm liquid suet is blended with the other ingredients in a mold and allowed to cool harden. The resulting "master block", which weighs approximately seventy pounds, is then pressed through fine cable harps to cut to portion size. This method allows for proper, even suspension of the particles throughout the block. It also allows us to eliminate the plastic or cardboard boxes others use to form their cakes. Our plug style suet is mixed in our usual manner and extruded hydraulically.

## Packaging

Single unit, clear overwrap with label card inside, packed 20 per case. We will custom produce Ponderosa or Sugar pine cones packed with any of our suet products. Over the past couple of winters we have made fifteen pound suet tubs that last throughout the winter on a platform feeder of my design. We include the hardware to connect your platform board to a metal post.

## Adding Scents

From what I understand, the only birds with well-developed senses of smell are the vultures and possibly pigeons. Vultures will probably not be visiting your back yard feeder which raises the question, "Why do suet cake manufacturers put fruit essences in their products and perfume on their labels?" "Stinkum" inside or perfumed labels on bird products make no sense and appear to be a ploy to create a useless profit driver.

## Skipio's Wild Bird Suet Blocks and Plugs

**OREGON SUET BLOCK™**

**Skipio's Peanutbugger Block™**

**Cascade Summer Suet Block™**

**Appalachia Suet Block™**

**Bug'Mmms™**

### Buying the Best

I like making great bird food, but I do not like the bird food business. I have made many improvements and innovations through the years. Manufacturers have tried to copy my products, but have used inferior ingredients creating a substandard product that confuses customers.

Additionally, some retailers do not properly handle, store and distribute suet products,

causing concerns for their customers. I remain dedicated to providing the best wild bird food available in the marketplace. I am always happy to hear from customers and answer any questions. I hope you'll try our products and see the difference for yourself.

### Dimensions and

### Weight

Blocks, 4" x 4" x 1.25"

Plugs, round 1" x 4"

OREGON SUET BLOCK™ weight is ten ounces per block. Peanutbugger, Cascade and Appalachia blocks weigh ten and a half ounces. Plugs are three to a package weighing nine ounces.

## Oregon Suet Block™

Oregon Suet Block™ was the world's first wild bird food incorporating processed insects into the product. It is still the best. Oregon Suet Block™ is now in the twenty-fifth year of continuous production.

OSB™ was designed upon the premise that wood peckers, for whom it was made, are insectivores. Several fine products were available at the time which were either made of grains and suet or grains and tallow. I differentiate between the two as there are cost and nutritional differences. The common term "suet cake" does not necessarily mean that the product actually used rendered beef kidney suet. In fact, commercial tallow is most commonly used. Tallow is a conglomeration of many fats, possibly all beef, that is made of all the fats of the animal, rendered. Of the two similar products beef tallow is softer and lower in calories per gram.

The insect component in Oregon Suet Block™ is grown and processed by Fly Farm Systems, LLC, using proprietary apparatus and techniques. We believe that OSB™ has the highest percentage of insects of any suet cake product. The insects used include larvae, pupae and adult flies. Whole insects of each stage are used as targets for the birds and so that visible insects will be apparent for the buyer. However, most of the insects in the formula are ground fine and are not recognizable. Birds coming to the feeder are often under stress and observation by predators. We use high quality fat and ground insect so that even if the bird has only time for a quick peck at the block it gets a useful, nutritious bite of the food. Over the years we have heard from hundreds of users who claim that the Oregon Suet Block™ lasts nearly four times as long as cheaper tallow cakes. Our higher price is usually felt to be an economical purchase based on superior nutritional value and duration in the feeder.

### Appalachia Suet Block™

This product was made like the favored, old bird food recipe "Miracle Meal" which reportedly goes back to colonial times. Ben Franklin supposedly fed the "Blue Robins" around his home with a mixture of bacon grease and corn meal. We updated the formula with the addition of insects to the ground corn meal and rendered beef kidney suet.



### Cascade Suet Block™

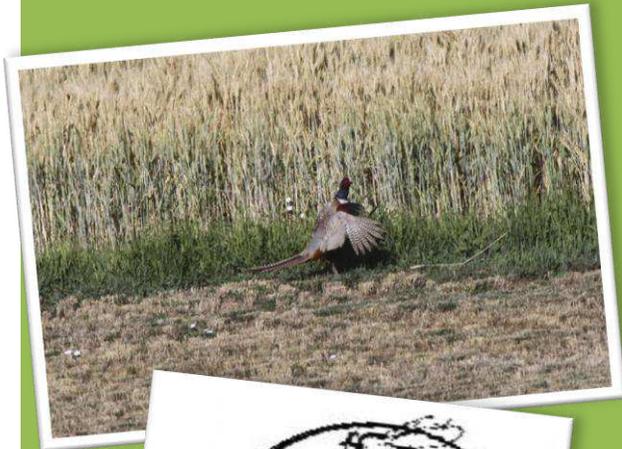
Many of our OSB™ customers voiced the need for a suet they could use during the hot months and we responded with Cascade Suet Block™. Unlike many suet cakes we grind the millet before mixing with the other ingredients. This provides additional fiber but also exposes the lecithin in the seed. Lecithin is a natural emulsifier and serves to stabilize the fat in higher temperatures.



### Peanutbugger Block™

This product was made in response to customers who found that many of the suet eating birds also enjoyed peanut butter. The whey provides quick energy.





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### Ingredients:

*Musca domestica*, Common Housefly: The insect component of these products is custom grown and processed for this purpose. *Musca domestica* has a demonstrably better nutrient profile than the other common feeder insects meal worms and crickets.

Rendered beef kidney suet: frozen, whole beef kidney "knobs" are batch rendered in house. This suet, not to be confused for rendered beef tallow, is preserved with natural antioxidants.

Rendered beef kidney suet is denser and has more calories per gram than beef tallow.

Peanut butter: human food grade

Dried cheese whey: human food grade

Calcium: oyster shell ground in house to spec

Ground millet: white proso millet ground in house to spec

Corn Meal: locally grown non-GM corn ground in house to spec and

Spirulina: powdered blue-green algae to provide natural source of vitamins and minerals.

### Bug'Mmms™

Bug'Mmms™ is a costly product. And it works better drawing birds to seed feeders than anything else we know of. One twelve-ounce bag blended into twenty five pounds of mixed seed dramatically increases bird visits to the feeder. This is a proprietary product on which we hold the original patent to make animal food by insect augmentation of puffed grain. For Bug'Mmms™ the grain is puffed millet. In its raw form puffed millet, known as "berries", is rated at 4% crude protein. We produce liquefied insect from fresh larvae. This liquid is used to saturate the puffed berries which contain many crevices and cracks. As the drying berries shrink they enclose the insect particles. The product, now enhanced to 18% protein, is finish dried. Half of the treated berries are supplemented with Spirulina. The second ingredient for Bug'Mmms™ whole dried *Musca domestica* pupae which serve two functions, as nutritional element and as a source of ultraviolet reflectivity. Many birds are capable of detecting the UV reflectivity and it generally indicates a food source. This draws the birds to investigate the seed into which the product is blended at one twelve-ounce package per twenty-five pounds of seed mix.