

## **A NOVEL APPROACH FOR HAND-REARING CHILEAN FLAMINGOS (*Phoenicopterus chilensis*)**

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### **Abstract**

A hand-rearing protocol was developed based on progressive series of food items offered to parent-reared flamingo chicks. Two (0.2) Chilean flamingos (*Phoenicopterus chilensis*) were hand-reared due to parental neglect and medical management starting at 24 and 32 days of age. The hand-rearing formula was based on ground Flamingo 24 (Zoological Society of San Diego, San Diego CA 92112 USA), Zoologic Milk Matrix 30/55 (PetAg, Inc., Hampshire, IL 60140 USA), Emeraid-II (Lafeber Co., Cornell, IL 61319 USA), and water. Three formulas were developed and the percentage of Flamingo 24 increased with decreasing amounts of Milk Matrix 30/55 and Emeraid-II as the birds aged. All three formulas averaged 36.1% solids and 26.4% protein (DMB). Formula fat content decreased from 18.7 to 18.3 to 4.3% (DMB). Initially the birds were tube fed three times/day decreasing to 1 time/day by 122 days of age. Birds were weaned at 114 and 135 days of age. The mean consumption was 18.7 % (as-fed basis) of body weight and average daily gain was 39.2 g/day from the start of hand-rearing to 60 days of age. During the next 30 days, the birds' mean consumption was 9.6% (as-fed basis) of body weight and gained 13.4 g/day from 60 to 90 days of age. The birds were within the body weight range (1.79 to 2.34 kg,  $n = 5$ , 134 to 172 days of age) of female parent-reared cohorts prior to return to the flock. This hand-rearing protocol attempts to mimic the parental contributions of crop milk and subsequent decrease of that specialized food item, and a consequent increase in the adult diet, as would occur in parent-reared birds.