



Paws, Claws & Wings

Physical and Behavioral Rehabilitation for Animals



Important Bird Diseases

Several diseases that birds carry can easily be transmitted to humans and some of these can be fatal. Tests are available to ensure that your bird is free from most of these diseases. It is recommended that birds are only bought from a breeder who offers a certificate that the bird is disease free. Otherwise when a new bird is bought, get him tested immediately. Never buy a bird that is in a poor condition or looks sick because you feel sorry for it, in the long run you may just be setting yourself up for heartache.



Green urates caused by *Chlamydia Psittaci*

Chlamydia Psittaci

Chlamydia Psittaci is also known as Psitticosis, Parrot fever and Ornithosis. This disease is spread through feather dust and dried faces and is carried by air circulation. Some other diseases have similar symptoms so testing will have to be carried out to confirm whether your bird has this disease.

As *Chlamydia Psittaci* is a zoonotic disease it is a notifiable disease, which means that the state vet must be informed if your bird contracts it. The bird will then be placed under quarantine for as long as it is being treated, even birds that have been treated may become carriers so another test needs to be performed after the treatment to make sure that the bird is free of the disease

This disease can affect all birds but most humans that become ill will have been infected by a pigeon or a parrot. *Chlamydia* is most easily transmitted to immunosuppressed people, young children, the elderly and anyone who is not 100% healthy at the time.

If you have contracted this disease you will experience flu like symptoms, respiratory problems, head and neck pain and night sweats. Pregnant women are at risk of abortion.

If you suspect that you have been infected go to your doctor immediately and get yourself tested (a blood test is used). If the results are positive a course of antibiotics will be prescribed. If untreated, this disease can be fatal.

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There are several different methods of testing for this disease: 5 days of faecal samples may be collected, blood tests may be performed or a choanal and cloacal swab can be taken.

If your bird is tested and the results are positive, he will need to be placed on a course of antibiotics. A 45 day course of Doxycycline (diluted in the drinking water) can be used but for individual birds it is recommended that they have a Psittavet injection every week for 6 weeks. This is the best way to make sure they get the correct dose each time. All birds in contact with a positive bird should be tested.

Chlamydia Psittaci can present in many different forms. Older birds can often become carriers without showing any clinical symptoms. Young birds that have been exposed to high concentrations of the disease usually get a rapidly fatal form. The bird will be listless, depressed and not wanting to eat. There may be a discharge from the eyes, often the feathers will be puffed up, he may be breathing badly and will often have yellow or green urates (the normally white part of the faeces).

If the bird has the more chronic form of the disease, it may be emaciated, have conjunctivitis, neurological signs and diarrhea.



A Cockatiel with Chlamydia Psittaci

Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease (PBFD)

Beak and Feather disease is an extremely contagious and generally fatal disease. It is a viral disease and is shed in faeces and feather dust. This disease is extremely difficult to eradicate in a contaminated environment as it is very resistant to chemicals. It is sometimes possible to keep infected birds alive for a short time but as they are extremely infectious to other birds, euthanasia is recommended.

The clinical signs vary according to the severity of the infection and the age of the bird. Young birds may become suddenly sick, stop eating, develop crop stasis, diarrhea, and die quickly. The typical clinical signs of the disease in adult birds are feather loss, malformation of new feathers, beak necrosis, loss of feather dust and change of color

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of newly molted feathers especially on the head. The signs of PBF D must be distinguished from those of feather plucking where the bird is damaging or removing its own feathers. PBF D also causes severe immunosuppression and the bird may die from secondary infections.

Tests are available to detect the presence of this disease and they are very accurate. The only way to avoid this disease is to never introduce any new birds to your flock or to test every new bird you acquire. The infected bird may take from 3 weeks to 8 months or even longer to start showing signs of the disease.



An African Grey with PBF D

Proventricular dilatation syndrome (PDD)

This disease is also called Neuropathic Gastric Dilatation or Macaw Wasting Disease but all birds can contract it. This disease may spread through flocks quickly or result in sporadic sudden deaths.

PDD causes the forestomach to enlarge and stops normal contractions of the muscles. The results are that the bird cannot digest its food effectively; they appear to eat well, but lose weight. One may see undigested whole pieces of food in the faeces. As the gut function is decreased, secondary infections occur. The bird may drink and urinate more than usual. The bird may also show neurological signs (indicating brain involvement) such as seizures, being off balance and inability to move properly. As with most diseases these symptoms are not definitive and may also be caused by other diseases.

Sr. Emmylou Rivers

*Sr Emmylou Rivers
Veterinary Nurse
emmylou.rivers@gmail.com
082 576 7647
www.pawsclawsandwings.co.za*



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