

Bird – Psittacosis

The most important disease of birds is Psittacosis, which is also known as Parrot Fever or Ornithosis. The cause of this disease is infection with a bacteria called *Chlamydia psittaci*. It is transmitted by inhaling infected dried faeces or aerosolised discharge from the eyes and nostrils.

Human infections can range from a persistent cough, fevers and muscle aches to severe changes like meningitis and more rarely, death. Infection in humans is normally associated with poor immune system function, including the young or elderly, chemotherapy, organ transplant or HIV patients. If you suspect you may be infected, please contact your doctor.



Symptoms of infection in birds can include:

- Lethargy or quiet
- Sneezing, red nostrils, discharge from the nostrils
- Laboured breathing
- Conjunctivitis - red, watery eyes
- Diarrhoea
- Green colour of the urate (the normally white part of the dropping)
- Sudden death

In some birds, there may be no symptoms and these birds will be carriers of the bacteria, potentially infecting other birds and people.

Diagnosis

Detecting the infection can be challenging. While there is a specific test called a PCR, other diagnostic tests are usually performed concurrently. A negative PCR does not mean a bird is free from infection, especially those that are carriers. Cage Remodelling

Treatment

With appropriate medications, treatment is successful in most cases. Medications are given for a minimum of 45 days and it is generally recommended to treat the infected bird and any others that may have been exposed. Severely ill birds often require intensive hospitalisation and the success of treatment in these cases will depend on how advanced the infection is.

Prevention

Have all birds examined by an avian veterinarian and tested for Psittacosis

Provide good nutrition, a clean enclosure and low stress environment

Quarantine all new birds immediately

They must be kept in completely separate rooms and not allowed any contact with the existing flock

Food and water containers, perches and other accessories must only be used for the new addition

Have them examined as soon as possible by an avian veterinarian and be tested for Psittacosis

Monitor breeding flocks periodically