

# BIRD DISEASE GUIDE

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE A SICK BIRD?

### REGURGITATION

*Physiologic* - Between male and female during incubation and during chick feeding, on mirrors on their reflection, on favorite toys or on their owner

*Pathologic* - The crop is distended, secretion on the sides of the beak and head feathers, weariness and low appetite.

**Possible causes:** Crop inflammation, foreign body, lead intoxication, liver problems, thyroid gland hyperplasia (especially budgies) or candida.

**Prevention:** Varied and balanced diet, be careful to objects that could be ingested and to objects that could contain metals.

**DISTENDED CROP:** Pasty content that empties with difficulty

**Possible causes:** Crop stasis due to a crop inflammation, viral disease, proventriculus dilatation disease, intoxication and systemic disease.

**PROVENTRICULUS OR INTESTINE ATONY OR ILEUS:** little or no stool.

**Possible causes:** Bacterial or fungal inflammation of the proventriculus, Proventriculus dilatation disease or parasites.

**DIARRHEA:** Soft stool, abnormal color or smelly. Feathers around cloaca dirty with droppings, weariness.

*Do not confuse diarrhea and polyuria.*

**Possible causes:** Bacterial, fungal or rarely parasitical enteritis or hepatic diseases and systemic diseases.

**MASS IN THE CLOACA:** Abnormally coloured droppings, feathers around cloaca soiled, mucus in droppings, blood traces in droppings and visible mass in cloaca.

**Possible causes:** Cloaca papillomatosis (sexually transmitted disease and transmitted when birds feed each other)

Cloacae prolapse (generally following a difficulty during egg laying or infection of the cloaca that causes difficulty defecating)

**DIAHRREA, WEAKNESS, NOT EATING, EATING LESS, DULL FEATHERS, GREENISH URATES AND DROPPINGS.**

**Possible causes:** Chronic hepatic disease

**Prevention:** Varied and low fat diet, encourage exercise. However a genetic predisposition in cockatiels and amazon parrots is possible, a hormonal or infectious cause is also possible.

## **FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM**

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE DISEASE, THE BIRD WILL SHOW VAGUE SIGNS LIKE SIGNING LESS, DULL FEATHERS, EATING LESS, DISTESION AND AN ABDOMINAL HERNIA, RESPIRATORY DIFFICULTIES AND PROGRESSION TOWARDS DEATH.

Peritonitis is the consequence of a reproductive system infection (ovaries, salpindx, and uterus). The egg yolk is a very good environment for bacteria culture. Difficult egg laying aftermaths are also predisposing factors.

### **SUDDEN STOP IN LAYING EGGS AND VAGUES SIGNS OF DISEASE LIKE SIGNING LESS, EATING LESS AND WEAKNESS.**

**Possible causes:** Impaction of the oviduct that can be a consequence of inflammation of the reproductive system that causes a clog from the excess egg material, deformed egg or soft shell.

### **EGG RETENTION AND DIFFICULTY LAYING EGG**

Very frequent in budgies, lovebirds and cockatiel, less observed in bigger psittacine and passerine.

Time between egg fabrication and laying is, in average, 24h and produces one to eight eggs by brood.

### **PUSHES TO EXTERNALIZE SOMETHING WITH LEGS SQUAT APART, TOUSLED FEATHERS, DISTENDED ABDOMEN, AND WEARINESS; CAN LEAD TO DEATH.**

**Possible causes:** Difficulty laying egg

**Prevention:** Give a diet balance and adequate in calcium and vitamin D3, do not encourage laying in young and old birds and encourage exercise.

## **MALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM DISEASES**

**Orchitis** (Testicles inflammation): Following a systemic infection, signs of disease are non-specific like not eating, weariness, tousled feathers, etc.

**TESTICLES TUMORS:** especially budgies.

The male will show signs of feminisation (hyperkeratosis of the cere); signs of pecking can be present.

## URINARY SYSTEM DISEASE

**POLYURIA:** The bird urinates a lot and when there is a mass on the kidney we can observe limping then paralysis to one or two paws.

**Possible causes:** bacterial or viral infection, hypovitaminosis A, hypervitaminosis D and kidney tumors (parakeets between 2-5 years old)

## DEFORMED JOINTS, LIMPING, DIFFICULTY FLEXING TOES

**Possible causes:** *Gout* is a kidney disease that impedes the urates elimination so they settle everywhere in the system.

**Prevention:** Give a balanced diet and not too rich in proteins, be sure the birds has unlimited water, vary the diet (pellets, grains, vegetables and fruits)

## SKIN DISEASES

**PICKING** (Chest, leg or back, sometimes the whole body)

Picking can start by tearing off feathers and end by auto mutilation or directly auto mutilation.

**Possible causes:**

- ✚ **Diet:** An unbalanced diet will cause an inadequate feather growth so fragile, dull feathers and the bird will try smoothing them and they will break.
- ✚ **Stress and environment:** When stressed a bird will take care of his feathers excessively and picking follows. Here are couple situations that are stressful: Changing owner, changing residence, arrival or loss of a companion, lack of socialisation, etc.
- ✚ **Socialisation:** It is very important to respect the bird and understand its relationship with the owner and other members of the family. You cannot pet him, give him kisses all day long, have him on your shoulder 24/7 and from a day to the other stop all this; he will feel indifference, abandonment, solitude, sadness and anxiety! There has to be a balance in the relationship between bird and owner.
- ✚ **Inadequate feather trim:** it may rub the skin and the bird will try to solve the problem by its own means and will end up hurting himself more and auto mutilation will follow.
- ✚ **Disease:** A bird, if he is hurting or has a systemic disease, will tell us his own way, he will try to relieve the pain by smoothing his feathers continuously, that his a clue that you have to consult your veterinarian to treat the primary disease and avoid picking from happening.

Follicular cyst and local infection, internal and external parasites, nest preparation hormones for females, sexual frustration, polyfolliculosis in lovebirds (many feathers growing in the same follicle)

**FEATHER CYSTS:** Affects specially canaries

Subcutaneous cyst at the base of the feathers follicles

## **ABSCENCE OF FEATHERS OF THE CANARY'S HEAD**

The cause is genetic with a testosterone drop.

## **CRUSTS ON THE BEAK, SIDES OF THE BEAK, SKIN BETWEEN MANDIBULES, CROUTES SUR LE BEC, PERI-EYE AREA, ON PAWS AND PERI-ANAL (especially parakeets):**

*Possible cause:* Beak and paw mites

## **FRAGILE, ULCERED UNDERPAW, DETACHED SKIN.**

### **PLANTAR PODODERMATITIS (BUBLEFOOT):**

*Possible causes:* A deficiency in amino acids and vitamin A, traumatic perches.

## **HARD KERATINE CRUSTS ON PAWS:**

### **CANARY PAWS HYPERKERATOSIS:**

*Possible causes:* Mites, vitamin A deficiency, genetic problem, local paw infection.

## **YELLOWISH MASS OR NODULES ON THE SKIN, EXTREMITY OF THE WINGS, STERNUM AND ABDOMEN: XANTHOMA OR XANTHOGRANULOMTOS**

*Possible causes:* Unknown, diet rich in fat, inflammatory reaction

## **FOOD DEFICIENCY**

### **IN CALCIUM AND VITAMIN D**

The calcium/phosphorus rate is normally 1.5/1.

Female laying eggs have a bigger need 3:1

*Disease signs:* Rickets with bone deviation, pathologic fractures, bird cannot fly and hardly moves, tetanic attack (shaking)

*Prevention:* A balanced diet and supplement laying female with calcium and vitamin D3.

### **VITAMIN A DEFICIENCY/EXCESS**

Abundant keratin on the glands on the oral mucosa as whitish cysts, respiratory difficulties because of higher respiratory mucosa thickening, gout, hyperkeratosis, paw pododermatitis and diarrhea.

*Prevention:* Balanced diet

## **VITAMIN K DIFICIENCY**

### **ABNORMAL PROLONGED BLEEDING**

*Prevention:* Prevent intestinal mal absorption problems and avoid vitamin A excess.

## RESPIRATORY DIFFICULTIES

### EXTRA RESPIRATORY:

**Possible causes:** Obesity, volume increase of and abdominal organ, retained egg, abdominal distension because of liquids, abscess or mass compressing the trachea.

### RESPIRATORY:

**Possible causes:** For upper respiratory tract: Rhinitis, sinusitis tracheitis (bacterial, chlamydophilose, fungus, vitamin A deficiency, parasite, foreign object, virus, etc.) For lower respiratory tract: Pneumonia, airsacculitis, foreign object inhalation or allergies (especially macaws)

## CHLAMYDOPHYLOSE (PSITTACOSIS ET ORNITHOSIS)

Some bird can be healthy carrier and excrete and contaminate the environment during a stressful period.

**Disease signs:** *Rhinitis, sinusitis, cough, respiratory difficulties, diarrhea, conjunctivitis, urinates a lot and even neurological signs in small psittacines only.*

It is a zoonosis, which means it can be transmitted to human. Immunocompromised persons, young kids and elderly people are more likely to be contaminated by the bacteria. For this reason it is very important to get your bird blood tested for prevention to know if your bird is or not a carrier of this bacterium.

**Prevention:** Get the blood test for your bird, isolating any sick bird, disinfecting any material in contact with a sick bird.

## ASPERGILLOS

Fungus named *Aspergillus fumigatus* that is found in the environment and the bird infects himself by inhaling the fungus spores. African grey parrots and amazon parrots and more prone than other birds.

**Disease signs:** They are primarily signs of **severe pneumonia**.

**Prevention:** Good hygiene and good diet.

## AIR SAC MITES

Diamond Gould finches and canaries are more prone to contracting air sac mites.

**Signs of disease:** CHANGE IN VOICE OR LOSS OF VOICE, SHAKING HEAD, NASAL DISCHARGE and bacterial super-infection

**Prevention:** none

## TEFLON INTOXICATION (polytetrafluoroethylene)

The overheating of pans coated in Teflon liberates a very toxic emanation.

**Signs of disease:** Respiratory difficulty and sudden death

## **HEAVY METAL INTOXICATION (LEAD AND ZINC)**

Metal intoxication is more frequent than we think.

**Disease signs:** According to the stage of the disease, we can observe some or all of the following signs: weariness, regurgitation, vomiting, diarrhea, shaking, paresis, tilted head, dizziness, convulsions, abundant urine with blood and a greenish color.

**Prevention is removing or not exposing the bird to any intoxication sources.**

**Main sources of lead:** Lead based paint (especially minium and anti-rust paint), some lubricants, some varnishes, some welds, hunting lead, munitions, fishing leads, weights for curtains and drapes, counterweights for wheels, analytical instruments weights, lead soldiers and toys, batteries, ceramic objects, stained glasses, crystal, optical material.

**Main sources of zinc:** Coins, screw, bolts, galvanized nails, some zinc based decorations, galvanized object, galvanized cage bars, galvanized iron thread, grocery bags ties, galvanized drinkers and feeders

Unfortunately, chemical composition of some articles is unknown so you have to use only objects for which the chemical composition is clearly identified.