

Psittacosis Checklist for Owners of Infected Birds

Psittacosis (parrot fever) is a bacterial infection of humans resulting from exposure to infected birds, usually psittacine birds (e.g., cockatiels, parakeets, parrots, and macaws). The infection in birds is called avian chlamydiosis. Healthy appearing birds can carry the bacteria and shed it when stressed, causing infection of other species of birds (e.g., finches, canaries, and doves) housed in the same environment. Following these guidelines will aid in the elimination of avian chlamydiosis from infected and exposed birds and reduce the risk of transmission from birds to caretakers.

EDUCATE all persons in contact with infected or exposed birds.

- Explain that this disease can spread from birds to people and that they can prevent human infection and minimize the disease spread among birds if they follow the information provided below.
- Bird caretakers with respiratory symptoms should seek medical care and inform their healthcare provider about their bird contact.

PROTECT CARETAKERS by wearing protective clothing when handling potentially infected birds or cleaning cages.

- Wear gloves, coveralls or disposable gowns, disposable caps, protective eyewear (e.g., goggles) and a properly fitted respirator mask (N95 or higher rated).

PRACTICE GOOD HUSBANDRY to reduce stress in birds.

- Maintain good nutrition. Keep all food and treats in a separate room in closed containers.
- Isolate newly acquired birds for 30 days and observe for illness.
- Separate birds (e.g., group in separate rooms, utilize barriers between cages, etc.) to prevent bird to bird contact and cross contamination of feathers, food and other cage materials.
- Minimize stress (e.g. relocation, unnecessary handling, chilling, overheating).



CLEAN & DISINFECT

- Effective disinfectants include bleach & water (1:32 dilution), 1% Lysol®, or quaternary ammonia compounds
- Most disinfectants require 5-10 minutes of contact time on a surface free of any fecal material and/or cage debris to be effective.
- Frequently remove waste material from cages and prevent aerosolization by moistening waste material in cages with a disinfectant solution prior to removal and double bag all waste.
- Clean and care for healthy birds before ill birds.
- Clean & disinfect all cages, food and water bowls **daily** and whenever moving birds. Wash with detergent, rinse with water, then apply disinfectant (allow appropriate contact time), and rinse with water.
- Wet mop the floor frequently with disinfectant solution to minimize aerosolization of dried feces, dust, and feathers.
- Spray floor with disinfectant before sweeping. **Do not** use a vacuum cleaner or pressure washer.

MAINTAIN ACCURATE RECORDS of all birds for at least one year.

- Bird records should include date, species, identification, source, any clinical signs, illness, treatment, and bird deaths.
- Customer records should include name, address, phone number, and bird identification.

TEST birds that may have been exposed to infected bird(s).

- Bird testing & treatment should be conducted or supervised by an experienced avian veterinarian.

ISOLATE ill birds from all other birds

- Clinical signs of avian chlamydiosis include lethargy, loss of appetite, ruffled feathers, and might include eye and nasal discharge, bright green diarrhea, and/or low body weight. Never sell or distribute ill birds.

FOLLOW TREATMENT PROTOCOLS

- Follow all instructions from the treating veterinarian for treatment, isolation and quarantine, follow-up testing and handling of the ill and exposed birds.
- Continue medication for the full treatment period (i.e., 30 or 45 days) as established by the veterinarian.
- Remove sources of calcium (e.g., mineral block, oyster shell, and cuttlebone) from cages as these supplements may inhibit absorption of the treatment medication, reducing the likelihood that treatment will be successful.