

# Psittacosis Prevention Checklist for Pet Stores and Aviaries

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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 prevention of avian chlamydiosis in pet stores and aviaries and reduce the risk of transmission from birds to staff and customers.

**EDUCATE** all persons in contact with birds (e.g., employees & customers).

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

**PURCHASE** birds from reliable sources.

- Buy from sources that test for avian chlamydiosis and guarantee the health of their birds.
- Buy directly from a breeder when possible.

**PRACTICE GOOD HUSBANDRY** to reduce stress in birds.

- Maintain good nutrition and 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).



**MAINTAIN ACCURATE RECORDS** of all birds for at least 1 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.

**PROTECT STAFF** through the use of the following protective clothing when handling potentially infected birds or cleaning their cages:

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

**CLEAN & DISINFECT**

- 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 & 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.
- Effective disinfectants include bleach & water (1:32 dilution), 1% Lysol®, or quaternary ammonia compounds.
- Most disinfectants require 5-10 minutes of contact time to be effective

**TEST** new birds upon arrival and before boarding or selling.

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

**ISOLATE** ill birds from all other birds.

- Clinical signs & symptoms 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**

- If a veterinarian diagnoses avian chlamydiosis in your facility, follow all instructions from the veterinarian for treatment, isolation and quarantine, follow-up testing and handling of the ill birds.
- Continue medication for the full treatment period (i.e., 30 or 45 days) as established by the veterinarian.

Adapted from *Compendium of Measures to Control Chlamydophila psittaci Infection Among Humans (Psittacosis) and Pet Birds (Avian Chlamydiosis)*, National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV) 2009.

<http://www.nasphv.org/documentsCompendiaPsittacosis.html>