



Fact Sheet: Psittacosis-Parrot Fever

What is Avian Psittacosis?

Avian Psittacosis, also known as Chlamydiosis, is a disease that affects a wide variety of bird species. It is a communicable disease that can be transmitted from birds to humans. Since Psittacosis is commonly associated with parrots, doctors often call the disease "Parrot Fever". Nationally, there are 100-200 reported human cases each year, although the actual number is probably much higher. (Michigan.gov/mda)

What are the symptoms in humans?

- Mild, flu-like infection
- Fever, chills
- Headache
- Lack of appetite
- Rash
- Muscle aches
- Upper and/or lower respiratory disease
- Extensive pneumonia (or difficult breathing)
- Incubation period: 1-4 weeks

Since physicians rarely diagnose Chlamydiosis, it is important to tell a doctor if you own or care for birds. Proper diagnosis requires special blood testing. Laboratory results take time and a doctor may prescribe an antibiotic during this waiting period. If a person has Chlamydiosis and begins antibiotic treatment, they will feel better right away. Always continue a medication until gone and follow the treatment instructions of your physician.

How is it spread?

Psittacosis is usually spread by inhaling (by nose or mouth) tiny, Chlamydomphila organisms from dried feces or dust from bird cages or birds. All birds legally imported into the U.S. are treated to prevent this infection. In some cases, the infection is unknowingly transmitted from a "carrier" bird. This is a bird that will show no sign of illness but continues to excrete the Chlamydiosis agent in their bird droppings. Birds that are not treated properly before they are sold or birds that are illegally imported, risk spreading the disease to other healthy birds and humans.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self -diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information call your health care provider or 257-3612.

What are the symptoms in birds?

Two or more of the following symptoms:

- Ruffled feathers
- Depression
- Diarrhea
- Discharge from eyes and nares
- Poor appetite
- Weight loss
- Death

How are infected birds treated?

- Birds require treatment by a Veterinarian
- Birds are fed medicated pellets for 45 days
- Any infected birds must remain isolated during the treatment period
- Only one person should do all the cage cleaning, bird handling, and treatment to minimize exposure
- Protective mask and clothing should be worn
- Re-test bird after the 45 day treatment is over

Despite having had Chlamydiosis, birds and humans do not develop immunity to the disease.

Some recommendations for prevention:

- Maintain accurate records of all bird purchases and sales
- Avoid buying or selling ill or illegal birds
- Isolate newly acquired birds for 30 days and ask for disease testing before you buy
- Practice good biosecurity: keep cages, dishes, toys and bird area clean; disinfect cages before transferring from one cage to another
- Cage papers should be moistened with disinfectant to minimize human exposure to dried droppings
- Feather and dust circulation should be kept to a minimum since they may contain infective organisms

Visit our website at: www.gchd.us or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: www.cdc.gov

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