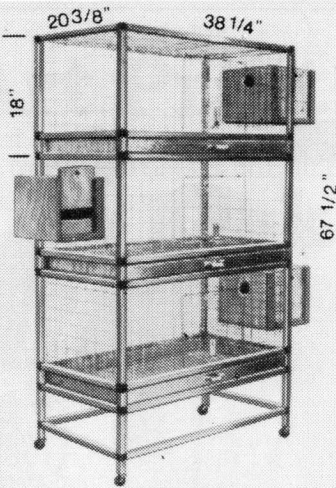


Veterinary Viewpoints

edited by Amy Worell, D.V.M.
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Editor's Note: The AFA is very pleased to present a new series of columns called Veterinary Viewpoints, edited by Amy Worell, D.V.M. Dr. Worell was graduated from Auburn University with a D.V.M. degree, with honors. She has practiced in southern California for the last six years where she sees a large number of avian patients. She has a special interest in pediatrics and nutrition and, as an aviculturist, is currently working with nine species of cockatoos, African gray parrots, scarlet macaws, and pionus parrots. Dr. Worell is active in a number of professional associations and is a frequent lecturer on avian medicine.

A unique thing about Veterinary Viewpoints is that a number of veterinarians are consulted and a broad spectrum of viewpoints are presented. You won't get just one veterinarian's opinion. No single vet can know all about everything so Dr. Worell will solicit answers from various vets. This way we hope to get the best answers from the best people on any given subject.

Question: I have about 25 canaries in an outside aviary. This past week, I have had three die suddenly. The birds that died had scabs on their skin and two of them had loose stools. I think that they have diphtheria. What do I do?

J. Jensley, California

Answer: Your description suggests that your canaries are probably infected with canary pox, which is also called avian diphtheria. This viral disease affects several types of birds including canaries, poultry, pigeons, and parrots. The strains that affect these different species of birds are somewhat host specific, meaning that they infect only that specific species of bird. Some of these strains, though, appear to be infective for several species of birds.

Pox is transmitted by direct contact between birds, and through the bite of

an infected mosquito. Thus, canaries housed in outdoor flights, in areas where mosquitoes are present, are potentially susceptible to canary pox.

Pox in canaries is often a very deadly disease. Large numbers of birds may be affected, often with very high death losses. Two forms of the disease are possible in canaries, both the dry and wet form. Canaries affected with the dry form of the virus may have wart-like nodules on their legs, face, beak, and feathered areas of their body. Those canaries developing the wet or diphtheritic form of the disease often have large white or yellow colored plaques in the trachea or upper digestive tract.

Clinical signs observed in affected canaries are referable to the location and extent of the lesions. Many birds affected with the wet form of the disease will have trouble breathing, while those with lesions in the digestive system may stop eating.

Treatment involves supportive care and separation of sick birds. Vitamin A supplementation, eye ointments, antibiotics, and topical application of such combinations as mercurochrome and glycerin, may all be helpful. Disinfection of the environment, control of mosquitoes, and quarantine of new acquisitions, should be considered in both the control and prevention of canary pox.

Amy Worell, DVM

Question: I have been hand raising scarlet macaws for several years. This year, one of the babies developed a beak that goes to the right side. What causes this problem and what can I do to prevent it in future babies?

S. Armstrong, Texas

Answer: Beak deviations in hand-fed macaws are not uncommon. These bent beaks are thought to be the result of the vigorous feeding response which is often present in macaws. Theoretically, this overaggressive feeding manner causes the beak to bend or deviate to the side. In addition, inapparent respiratory infections in

young birds may detrimentally affect the rapidly developing growth area of the beak and thus cause the beak to form and develop abnormally.

Once this abnormality is noticed in a baby's beak, complete reversal of the change is usually not possible. Feeding the bird on the opposite side of the beak or applying pressure to the unaffected side of the beak during feeding may be helpful. Affected birds and future offspring may be trained to accept a soft feeding tube, which seems to prevent or alleviate the problem.

Birds with bent beaks may require intermittent shaping of their beak to improve their appearance. Most of these birds fair quite well in life as this abnormality is more unsightly than detrimental to the bird's well being. Amy Worell, DVM

Question: I recently noticed a beautiful Moluccan lory in a nearby pet shop. I am interested in buying this bird, but I understand that lorries are very messy and require a special diet. I presently own two pet cockatiels and a blue fronted Amazon. What can you tell me about this beautiful bird?
D. Bagnell, New York

Answer: Lorries are a group of birds that are often ignored and poorly represented in the pet trade. These birds are considered to be nectar eaters, and thus tend to produce a very liquid, messy dropping. Hand-fed lorries make wonderful pets, are very entertaining birds to watch, and many types become excellent talkers.

Traditional diets of pureed ingredients including peanut butter, fruits, vitamins and honey, are often offered on a twice daily basis. This type of diet can be quite time consuming to prepare and serve. Recently, a dry diet for feeding lorries has been developed. Most lorries readily accept this diet and the resulting droppings are considerably less messy than with the traditional diets.

Amy Worell, DVM

Question: I recently purchased a hand-fed yellow naped Amazon. As this is my first bird, I want to do everything right. I am feeding Elvis parrot seed, fruits, vegetables and vitamins. The pet store where I purchased him said I could feed him any fruit except avocado, as it will kill him. His cage is a large, brass parrot cage. He seems quite happy to me. What else do you suggest for Elvis's care?

T. Butterworth, Pennsylvania

Answer: First of all you should be congratulated on purchasing a hand-fed bird for a pet. You will be rewarded many times over for selecting a hand reared bird. I hope you and Elvis will develop a wonderful friendship.

I would suggest that you locate a qualified, knowledgeable avian veterinarian in your area to perform a complete physical examination and series of diagnostic tests on your new pet. As birds tend to hide signs of disease, investments in diagnostic tests such as blood panels and cultures are always good insurance to protect your new pet by determining the health status of your bird.

The diet you are offering Elvis can be expanded to include all table food. Anything that is good for you to eat is good for your bird also. This includes cooked meats, breads, pasta, egg, and avocado. Just remember if it is safe for you to eat, then it is also safe for your bird. This means, for example, since you would not eat the bark, leaves or pits of an avocado (these are the parts containing the toxin which is dangerous), neither should you offer them to your bird. The fruit of the avocado, though, is quite safe and is not known to cause problems in animals or people. Remember, too, that foods that are not nutritious for you, such as french fries and sweet rolls, should not be offered to your bird either.

Dietary supplementation with a calcium source such as a cuttlebone or mineral block is also recommended.

Amy Worell, DVM ●

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even husbandry or
anything else, please
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