



## *Flock Health Management:*

### *Part III*

by M. Scott Echols, DVM  
Brian L. Speer, DVM, Dip, ABVP,  
Certified In Avian Practice

In the next series of articles, we will discuss a variety of elements of the flock health program that will be used either directly or indirectly in the aviary evaluation process. These topics include the structural design maps, traffic flow maps, production records and financial records and each can serve to provide diagnostic information regarding the flock. How the veterinary/aviculturist team deals with the diagnoses made, depends on the aviculturist's mission statement as discussed in Part II of this series. This article focuses on the aviary or structural design maps.

#### **Who Needs Road Maps?**

When driving from point A to B, it is extremely helpful to know the paths you can take, especially when a roadblock is up and an alternate route must be chosen. Obviously, a road map serves to guide the driver through the area and allows one to make decisions such as the shortest distance between A and B, the scenic route, treacherous or dangerous paths and alternate streets that can be used in case the main highway is out. Now, for those familiar with all of the local streets, alternate routes, etc., how do you tell someone the best way to get to your house and at the same time, be able to anticipate all of the potential problems the driver may experience along the way. The answer is, you cannot predict every future problem and it is best if the parties involved have an area map.

#### **Aviary Maps**

This concept is also true in aviculture. A well constructed aviary map allows the veterinary/aviculturist team

to make educated decisions when problems arise, or better, make recommendations about preventative flock health care. As you will soon read, the aviary map, when used in conjunction with other diagnostic modalities (traffic flow maps, production records, etc.), can become a very useful tool in flock health management. For definition purposes, a "building" represents a free standing unit where birds are located and includes a pen, a house, a barn, hatching room, etc. The "facility" includes all of the buildings.

The aviary map should clearly depict the basic layout of the facility including locations of buildings and their spatial relationship to each other and surrounding structures (i.e., pond, tree lines, etc.), general building dimensions and construction materials, individual cage locations and their design, nest box locations and design, and any other information that may clearly and succinctly describe the conditions under which the birds are housed. The map should be drawn proportionally and should closely resemble the basic facility and individual building designs. As the veterinary/aviculturist team continues to manage the aviary, more specific information such as ambient temperatures, humidity, watering system, etc., may be requested.

#### **The Case of Jack Gray's Greys**

Now let's put the map into motion and use it to guide the managing team. Jack Gray has a large multi building facility and specializes in African Greys and a variety of *Poicephalus* spp parrots. Jack has always experienced increased chick mortality and

decreased production in Building #7 which contains 40 breeding pairs of mixed Congo and Timneh African Grey Parrots. The production records (this topic will be discussed in Part V of this series) clearly indicate very high pediatric mortality and poor production in some birds and excellent statistics in others within the same building. Traffic flow maps (to be covered in Part IV) depict a healthy organized pattern of feeding and movement within the building. When compared to other buildings within Jack's facility, Building # 7 is losing or not producing an estimated 40-60 chicks a year. This business is Jack's livelihood, as written in his mission statement (described in Part II), and Building # 7 currently represents a financial loss.

Closer inspection of the production records reveals that pediatric mortality decreases and egg laying goes up the further the birds are away from the West wall. Reviewing the building map does not reveal any peculiarities within Building #7, but the facility map shows that this building is the only one with the long axis directed North and South. In this case, the West wall of Building #7 is receiving direct sunlight from the afternoon sun cooking the nest boxes and their respective birds. One inexpensive method to test this theory is to place a sun barrier near the West wall to prevent direct sunlight. Traditional measures may have included medical "work-ups" on poor producers. Certainly, some medical problems are likely to be found in the "affected" birds, but the real issue represents an *environmental* problem.

#### **The Case of Jill Mealy's Amazons**

The next example involves Jill Mealy specializing in *Amazona* spp parrots. One of Jill's Double Yellow Head Parrots, "Max", was recently diagnosed with Psittacosis. Jill keeps all of her birds within her house and is concerned about testing and treating the other birds, which seem to be doing fine. Of the five rooms housing a total of 17 pairs, production records show that the six pairs of birds in the Game Room have lower than expected production for this year only. Max and his mate were alone in the Spare Bedroom when he first became ill, but

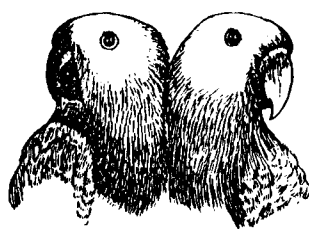
apparently both were moved from the Game room about three months ago. Nine months ago, a male Yellow Nape Parrot died from Pair #4 of an undiagnosed disease and was replaced by another breeder male from a "reputable source" without quarantine. The new Pair #4 produced no eggs this year.

Traffic flow maps show that the Game Room and Spare Bedroom are the last two rooms to be tended to and otherwise, traffic flow is well organized and has been carefully adhered to. The facility map shows the Game Room and Spare Bedroom on the North side of the house and the other three rooms containing birds on the South end. In Jill's mission statement, she states that this is her hobby, she wants to sell high quality birds and earn some extra cash but she cannot afford to subsidize these birds. Recommendations may include medical evaluation of pair # 4 and possibly another poor producing pair in the Game Room and/or treating the birds in the Game Room and Spare Bedroom, re-enforce the closed aviary concept, consider these two rooms infectious and carefully monitor traffic flow, and have Jill talk with her family Medical Doctor. Traditional approaches might suggest treating and/or testing all birds in the facility, but not only does this not make sense as most of the birds have no support of "disease" or exposure, but this would be very costly in terms of diagnostics performed and potential decreased production from the treatment itself.

### Conclusions

The purpose of these two examples is to show how facility maps, along with other aviary diagnostics, can be used in flock health management. Obviously the facility map alone does not give a very complete description of aviary health, but when used together with other diagnostics, it becomes an important component of flock health management.

As briefly mentioned in these cases, other components of flock health management including traffic flow maps, production records and financial records will be discussed in more detail in successive articles. ➔



# the Eclectus... Winged Flowers

by Jose Ml. Perdomo, San Mateo, CA

*[Author's Note: In the last two issues of Watchbird, we have crystallized, or perhaps just encapsulated, some of the basic information on the eclectus parrots, those "Winged Flowers" originally inhabiting one of the most unique and exuberant corners of our planet. These efforts were intended to provide our readership a starting point for the better understanding of these wonderful birds, and simultaneously, to create a condensed guide to the characteristics, requirements and general care of these colorful parrots. As we conclude this series with this last segment, we hope to have at least partially achieved our original goals. Only our readers will be able to assess if such expectancies met with reality, and if any value could be derived from these efforts. Let's now continue...]*

## Maintenance of the Eclectus

### Feeding

The Eclectus Parrots are not exclusive seed eaters. Avoid a diet containing only seeds. The best is to feed them a well-varied diet which should include vegetables, fruits, and sprouted beans. In addition, you may want to supply to the Eclectus  $\frac{1}{3}$  of its diet in the form of a high quality parrot pellet such as Roudybush, Scenic Paradise, Hagen's Tropicana, Harrison's, or equivalent pellets. For additional information on these and other pellets, consult the telephone directory located at the end of this article. Keep pellets available to the parrots all the time. In addition, or alternatively with the sprouts, the Eclectus should be fed soft food on a regular basis. The cooked bean recipe included below is a convenient form of meeting this soft food nutritional requirement. The diet of an Eclectus is very important for its growth and gen-

eral health. A well-fed bird will considerably reduce your trips to the vet. Do not feed avocado or chocolate to your Eclectus as they may get very ill following ingestion of these.

Providing soft food to your bird is not a major enterprise if you organize its preparation efficiently. Make a good soft food meal once a week and freeze the daily portions in plastic bags. All you will have to do daily is simply defrost and mix before feeding.

Purchase the following, preferably "organic in origin" from your local health food store or supermarket or at the source noted.

- Calcium carbonate or "Calcium Care" available from Phoenix Unlimited, Irving, TX, 214-554-8318
- Dry soybeans
- Dry corn
- Rice
- Wheat germ oil
- Spirulina and or wheat grass powder.

These dry powders are available from the health food store or from Earthrise, Petaluma, Ca., 800-995-0681. Many people prefer the wheat grass, over the spirulina. Another alternative is alfalfa powder.

From your local pet shop purchase the multivitamin and mineral powder for birds. The necessity of using vitamin and mineral supplements is questionable if good nutrition is supplied to your bird. Although if used in small quantities, it is unlikely to cause any problem to your bird, excessive doses could create some health hazard by causing a hyper-vitaminosis. Therefore, we list this ingredient as optional.