

the Vet's Corner

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PSITTACOSIS: A real threat!

It is a serious disease caused by a virus called Chlamidia, and can be transmitted to human beings by infected birds. It is basically an upper respiratory infection of both man and bird, and can be cured if properly diagnosed and treated. The organism (Chlamidia) is susceptible to treatment with an antibiotic called chlortetracycline (C.T.C.). Birds imported into the United States are required to undergo a quarantine period of at least thirty days, being treated with C.T.C. during that time. The scientific community is well aware that thirty days under treatment with C.T.C. is not enough. It takes at least forty five to ninety days of treatment to cure a "carrier," or an infected bird. Therefore, it is obvious that newly acquired birds should be isolated and treated with C.T.C. for at least two weeks before being exposed to any other birds in your household or



Taking a cloacal swab sample.

aviary. Don't take a chance, it's not worth it! Bird smuggling has become a big business in the State of California, and I am sure in the states of Arizona

and Texas as well. Florida and New York are in the same category. If a bird has a band that is U.S.D.A. authorized, it is probably alright. If there is no leg band, be suspicious. Keep the bird isolated and treated with C.T.C. for at least two weeks.

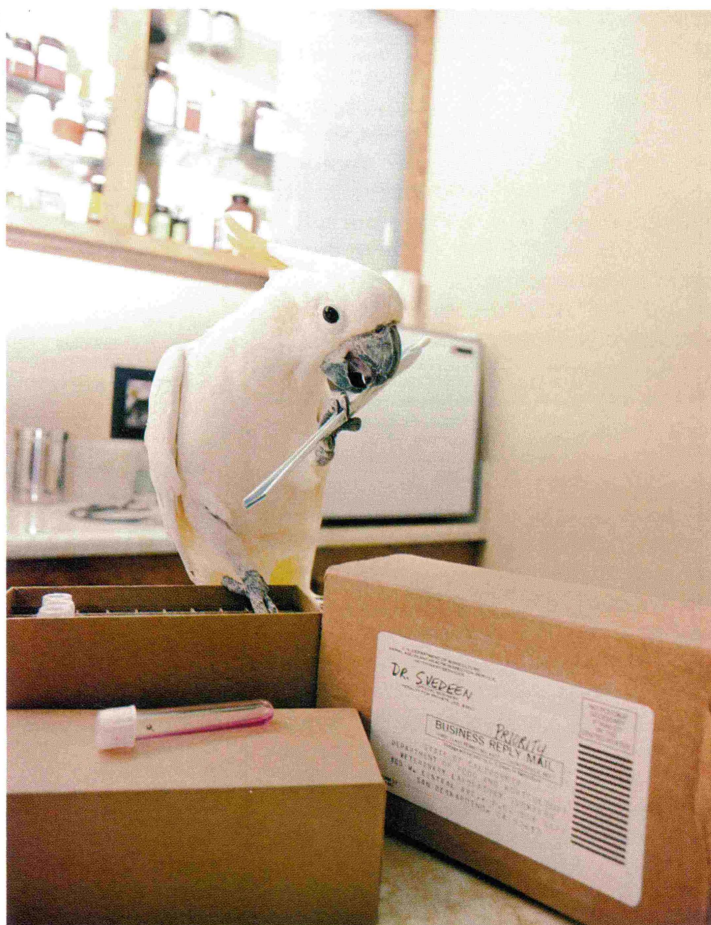
If you have acquired a new bird, have it examined by a veterinarian that has a special interest in birds. He or she will be able to tell you the state of the bird's health, and whether or not to place it on antibiotic therapy.

GOOD NEWS: In the State of California, we have been fortunate to have a talented group of Avian Pathologists, headed by Dr. Ralph Cooper, who have the capability of determining the cause of death in many avian species. This has been a tremendous asset to us, because the procedures are complicated and expensive. A large portion of the costs involved have been borne by the State, because of the threat of many diseases to our huge poultry industry. In a recent conversation with Dr. Cooper, he indicated that in the very near future, out of State submissions will be accepted for diagnosis for as little as \$20.00 per sample. This includes culture and sensitivity procedures, egg inoculation, and histopathology, which would cost in excess of \$100.00 in a commercial laboratory. Cloacal and biopsy samples should be obtained and submitted by your veterinarian. They must be collected aseptically and preserved properly in order to be diagnostically significant. Your veterinarian should contact our State Laboratory as to how to obtain shipment containers and collection instructions. The address is:

State of California,
Department of Food & Agriculture
Veterinary Laboratory Services
105 West Central Ave.
P.O. Box 5579
San Bernardino, Calif. 92412

Upon request, the laboratory will send your veterinarian collection tubes containing a culture broth treated with antibiotics, which are submitted after being inoculated with a cloacal swab. Chick embryos are inoculated with the broth, and after two week's incubation, this test will determine whether or not your bird has Psittacosis or Newcastle Disease (V.V.N.D.). In the event of death, it is ideal to submit the cadaver in its entirety under refrigeration or some sort of cold pack. Formalinized tissue samples may also be submitted for histopathological examination. Pre-addressed shipment mailer containers are provided by the State lab. ●

Photos by Loren Price



This handsome patient is sitting on a new multiple sample mailing kit provided by the State Lab. Single sample mailing tubes are also available.