

# the Vet's Corner

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## RESEARCH IN EXOTIC BIRD DISEASES

Those of us who work with exotic bird diseases are repeatedly faced with the lack of really definitive information on the subject. Pathologists like myself, who come from a background in poultry disease, are especially aware of the deficiency as compared with the enormous amount of information and continuing research which is characteristic of the poultry field. This situation is easily understood when a few basic facts of life are recognized. Most information on disease, its true nature and treatment, comes about in response to a need. The poultry industry has traditionally known how to attract the attention of researchers who are interested in seeking solutions

to their problems. They have also known how to finance such formal research, because research is usually costly in both money and men. Consequently, research in the field of poultry diseases is about as advanced as the state of the art permits. This is in glaring contrast to the situation in pet and exotic birds. With a few notable exceptions, most research has been conducted by a few interested professionals or laymen who are motivated by necessity or curiosity. Traditionally, even the valid information which comes from this sort of individual effort has not been made known to the other workers in the field in any sort of organized basis.

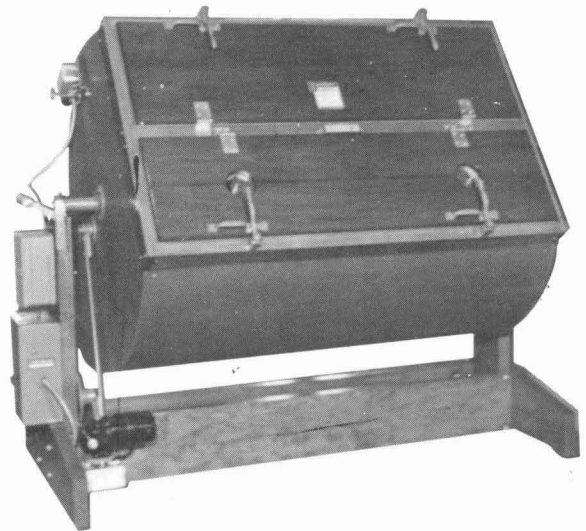
A specific example may serve to dramatize the point. Some of you will remember that I recently announced the results of some preliminary trials with the use of Tramisol for treatment of birds with worms. My acquaintance with the drug

goes back a couple of years or so. I learned from a friend that it had been used successfully, if with some difficulty, for the treatment of gizzard worms in finches. To date, it is the only drug which I know to be effective against that kind of worm. The next step came when I heard that it was being used in Holland or Germany for the treatment of roundworms in psittacines. Again, this information came to me during a casual conversation with a friend. When I tried it in one of my own cockatiels, it seemed to work like a charm. However, at that time we only knew how to administer it in the drinking water. I next read a recommendation for its use in pigeons by the drinking water route. I have since recommended its use in several flocks of pigeons which were suffering from round worms and it appears to be very safe and effective. In the case of our exotic birds, our experience is limited and

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not yet out of the experimental stage. I have recommended its use against roundworms in many different species and in several different concentrations. It is much too early to make any firm recommendations, but it appears that a dose five times stronger than the dose for pigeons will be both effective and safe for many exotic species. Two different owners have used doses ten times stronger than the pigeon dose without causing any death losses, although one cockatiel did show signs of toxicity, namely it appeared to be drunk. I hesitate to make any specific recommendations as to dosage in a report like this, but with the admonition that the information is only preliminary, and must be applied with the greatest caution, I will tell you how I am using it at this time.

The standard dose for use in pigeons is prepared in the following manner.

Tramisol Pig Wormer is reconstituted according to the directions on the package. This specifies the addition of 500 ml. of water to the bottle in which the powdered drug comes. Then, from that strong stock solution, one teaspoonful is taken to be added to each gallon of drinking water. The mixture is used as the sole source of drinking water for the birds for one full day. This dosage appears to be both safe and effective in pigeons, doves, quail, chickens, pheasants, and similar birds. For those of you who wish to know the true concentration of the active ingredient in the stock solution, it is approximately one gram per 28 ml. or about one gram per ounce. Tramisol is available in many different packages, and if you are not sure how to mix the stock solution from the particular form which you are able to obtain, you should seek expert advice.

The Five Fold Dose, which I am using in psittacines and finches, is prepared in the following manner.

The injectable form of Tramisol, which contains 18.2 gm. of active ingredient per 100 ml. of solution, may be used as the stock solution without dilution. One teaspoonful of it added to each gallon of drinking water. If the Pig Wormer is used, one way to prepare the stock solution is to add only 100 ml. of water instead of the 500 ml. which is specified by the package directions. This then gives a solution which is essentially equivalent to the injectable form. Other preparations, designed for sheep or horses, may be used with appropriate changes in the mixing directions.

There are some limited experimental results which suggest that the five fold dose may be effective against gizzard

worms in finches by the drinking water route. It would be premature to claim that this is the final answer, but it does look promising and will be pursued as a possible alternative to individual dosing in the crop.

The knowledge we have today regarding the use of Tramisol has come to us from the experimentation and sharing of results by many individuals, both professionals and laymen. Much more remains to be done, but at least we are making progress.

My very brief review of this specific situation has probably suggested to you that there is a vast potential for research and development in the field of exotic bird diseases which is relatively untapped. If only there were some organized way to gather information, to evaluate it, and then to disperse it to all interested parties, we could make enormous progress in a relatively short time. A number of us have been thinking of ways in which this might be done. I would like to give you some of my suggestions for your consideration and criticism.

I see the need for some sort of central organization which could act to identify the problems, to establish priority for research, to seek cooperators, both lay and professional, to do the research, and then to act as a source of information as to the results of that research. I have spoken with Dr. Arthur Bickford of the Cooperative Extension Service of the University of California at Davis about this proposal. Dr. Bickford shares my enthusiasm and believes that he could act as the coordinator of such an organization. I hope to invite all of the veterinarians in Southern California who are interested in birds to meet for an evening of discussion and sharing of ideas on this subject. I have also spoken with some of my friends in the bird clubs who have also shown enthusiasm for the concept. I invite each of you to consider the idea, talk it over with your friends, and with the members of your own organizations. If you are interested, get in touch with me and we will try to include you in some of the organizational sessions. At this point I am only considering a state-wide organization, but I see no reason why it should not be extended to include all of the United States, and even other countries. I believe that the potential good which it might accomplish will be in direct proportion to the imagination and dedication which we bring to it. I invite you to join in the opportunity which presents itself. ■

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that certain authors use the term "specie" as the singular form of "species". It should be noted that "specie" refers to legal tender, i.e., money — not to animals. The term "species" is both singular and plural.

Again, thank you for the great contributions you are making on behalf of American aviculture.

Gerald Moore  
Los Angeles, California

*We appreciate the update on the Latin name. Some of our reference books (to say nothing of our researcher) are a bit old and tired. And regarding the specie-species thing, we have a genuine interest in both but will be more careful how we use them in future editions.*

Ed.



Dear Editor:

I am writing to you at the suggestion of Jim Baird at the Audubon Society here in Massachusetts.

We have recently repaired an aviary on our property but we are uncertain as to what type of birds to put in it. The aviary is hexagonal, about 7 feet across and 12 feet high. A bird house which was obviously meant for small birds is standing in it.

Could you possibly steer us in the right direction as far as finding the information which we need to go about deciding on the appropriate birds? I would very much appreciate any information which you have.

Sincerely yours,  
Antonine Gal

*Your best bet would be to contact the local aviculturists. They can tell you from experience which birds do well in your particular area and climate zone. It would be well to meet with a bird club or two if there are any organized in or near your town. Club members are always delighted to express their opinions regarding your birds. Two A.F.A. member clubs that may share similar climate problems are:*

*American Singers Club  
Madeline Mysliwicz  
1413 N. Britton St.  
Wantagh, New York 11793*

and

*Greater Pittsburgh Cage Bird Society  
Herschel Frey  
1170 Firwood Dr.  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15243*

Ed.

## VETS CORNER

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### 1976

## PSITTACOSIS ROUNDTABLE

Everything you've always wanted to know about psittacosis, but were afraid to ask.

On May 17, 1976, a meeting of about 100 interested participants was convened in Los Angeles to discuss all aspects of the Psittacosis Problem. Included among the group were representatives and spokesmen from the quarantine stations, wholesalers, retailers, bird clubs and private collectors, Federal and State regulatory agencies, Federal, State, and County public health departments, Federal, State, and County diagnostic facilities, manufacturers and dealers in feeds, supplies, and medications, law enforcement agencies, and educational institutions.

The subjects covered ranged from a brief history of the disease through its characteristics, its impact on the quarantine station operators, dealers, and collectors, the influence of smuggling, and the treatment of individual birds and flocks. Each subject was introduced by an expert in the field and was thoroughly explored by the group. The discussions were informative, often spirited, and very interesting. The entire meeting was taped so that a permanent record might be prepared. Some seven hours of discussion have been edited and refined to yield about 85 pages of printed text. An effort was made to retain all of the solid and important facts which were presented, as well as some of the flavor of the animated discussions. This approach was taken because it is recognized that the solution of this kind of problem requires not only authoritative information, but a consideration of the human emotions which are involved.

If you have a personal or professional interest in the problem of psittacosis and wish to be more fully informed, this is your opportunity to obtain the most recent, authoritative, and concise information available in the past twenty years. Your copy of the 1976 Proceedings of the Psittacosis Roundtable will be mailed to you post paid upon receipt of your check in the amount of \$6.00. Checks should be made payable to and requests may be directed to:

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