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the Vet's Corner

Selected Soft Tissue — Pet Avian Surgical Procedures

by

Walter J. Rosskopf, Jr., D.V.M.

Richard W. Woerpel, D.V.M.

Sue Reed Blake, A.H.T.

Animal Medical Centre of Lawndale

4473 West Rosecrans Avenue

Hawthorne, California 90250

Avian and Exotic Animal Hospital

of Orange County

10661 Ellis Avenue, Suite C

Fountain Valley, California 92708

Introduction

In recent years, surgery in pet avian species has become more and more sophisticated. Development of newer gaseous anesthetics has made complicated internal work relatively routine. The purpose of this paper is to describe a few of the procedures which are now performed in a progressive pet avian practice.

Isoflurane Anesthesia

The anesthetic for routine and involved surgical procedures is a new gaseous anesthetic, isoflurane (Forane® - Ohio Chemical). We consider this product the anesthetic of choice in pet avian medicine. First used and studied in birds by Harrison, this gaseous anesthetic gives excellent surgical control. The product is now used extensively in humans because of problems with delayed hepatopathies of patients and an increased cancer rate in operating room personnel working with halothane and metofane.

Besides the safety of the gas and the ease of administration without the necessity of endotracheal intubation, the birds recover extremely fast with little or no wing flapping. The patients will often stand within seconds of cessation of the gas flow.

Other Anesthetics

Other anesthetic regimens can be used, of course, but do not have the safety and other advantages of isoflurane. Metofane induction by cone, followed by intubation and the use of halothane by an open breathing system, is one regimen. Others prefer metofane induction and metofane maintenance in a closed system. Gaseous anesthetics are usually chosen

because of rapid recovery time and relative safety and control.

Injectable anesthetics are used for certain procedures but are not as easy to control as the gases. Respiratory and cardiac depression may be complication factors. The authors prefer intravenous Rompun-Ketamine (equal volumes of 100 mg/cc Ketamine and 20 mg/cc Xylazine) if an injectable must be used.

In gases other than isoflurane and with the use of injectables, wing flapping on recovery is prevented by wrapping the patient in a large towel. By the time the bird can work itself out of the towel, it usually can perch and not injure itself.

Gaseous anesthetics are preferable for birds. It is extremely reassuring to have a patient "walk off the table," rather than remain comatose for a prolonged period of time following injectable anesthetics.

Pre-operative Evaluation

The clinical pathology laboratory plays an important role in the pre-operative evaluation of the avian patient. The problem of subclinical illness in caged birds and their ability to mask symptoms makes diagnosis of illness difficult.

In an elective surgery, every attempt is made to correct any abnormalities before proceeding. In a non-elective surgical procedure, the abnormalities are treated as part of the post-operative care. In a non-elective surgical procedure, the clinician is advised to be especially wary if an SGOT (SAST) rise has occurred. While not liver specific, an SGOT (SAST) rise often indicates liver disease which may portend poten-

Continues on page 50

DOMESTIC, HAND-FED BABIES



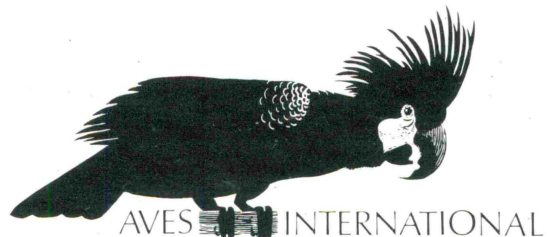
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The next Watchbird will carry more detailed information and all A.F.A. members will soon receive a packet in the mail. In the meantime one can contact: Jim Coffman, convention chairman, 1575 Bayshore Highway, Burlingame, CA 94010.

Make it a family vacation. San Francisco is a fantastic city of countless sites to see and things to do! Public attendance is invited and encouraged.

Photo courtesy of San Francisco Visitors Bureau



Camera captures the grandeur of a man-made wonder, the Golden Gate Bridge, arching gracefully toward the hills of Marin County, its red towers rising 716 feet (the height of a 65-story building) above the swirling tides at the mouth of San Francisco Bay.

tial bleeding problems. An injection of vitamin K₁ (1-2 mg/kg) prior to surgery may help minimize potential bleeding.

Antibiotics, Steroids and Fluids

Prior to an elective surgery, the authors prefer to initiate antibiotic therapy. Injectable penicillin derivatives such as Piperacillin (Pipracil® - Lederle) and Carbenicillin (Geopen® - Roche) used in combination with the newer aminoglycosides such as Tobramycin (Nebcin® - Eli Lilly) or Amikacin (Amikin® - Bristol) are preferred.

If a particularly risky surgery is to be attempted, especially in small bird patients, we prefer to give a shock dose of Dexamethasone (1 mg/lb I.M.) prior to surgery. In our experience, this seems to enhance success. We have most frequently used this technique when removing abdominal masses from budgerigars or attempting risky procedures such as egg yolk peritonitis cleanup or ectopic egg removal in small birds.

Fluid therapy is seldom necessary unless blood loss is severe. Intravenous fluids may be given to the anesthetized bird through the ulnar veins, using 25 or 26 gauge needles or butterfly catheters (Angiocath® - Deseret). We usually use Lactated Ringers solution or a mixture of 50:50 5% Dextrose and Lactated Ringers at a volume of .05cc/gm/body weight. Some of the fluids can be given I.V. and the rest subcutaneously (axillary and inguinal areas). Fluids are given by rapid bolus administration.

Warmth is critical to recovery in the avian surgical patient. Judicious use of heated cages, heating pads and incubators is important.

Ellman Surgitron vs. Conventional Instrumentation

The use of the Ellman Surgitron unit, as pioneered by Altman, has revolutionized pet avian surgery. Incision may be made with minimal bleeding using this equipment. Conventional instruments are often used in combination with the use of electrosurgery.

Surgical Procedures

Selected soft tissue surgical procedures used in pet avian practice will not be discussed. Surgical sexing, beak repair and orthopedics are not covered in this paper.

Oral Abscesses and Choanal Infections

A myriad of organisms can affect the pharyngeal area of birds. Gram negative infections, some gram positive infections, vitamin A deficiency break down of tissues, yeast infections (i.e., can-

didiasis), localized fungal infections (i.e., Aspergillosis), parasitic conditions (i.e., Trichomoniasis, nematode cysts, etc.) are all common. Choanal pus may break off and become inhaled, resulting in acute dyspnea and death.

Care must be taken to localize the infection with proper clinical pathology backup and systemic and local antibiotics before surgery is contemplated (unless inhalation of loose particles of pus seems imminent). The authors have seen and heard of inexperienced veterinarians restraining seriously ill birds to thoroughly curette mouth abscesses (as in the dog and cat approach) with resulting nightmarish hemorrhage and death. Be conservative with your approach! Always anticipate hemorrhage and internal complications and stabilize a patient before surgery. Remember that a bird with an abnormal looking mouth may have a similar looking liver.

When cleaning up oral and choanal abscesses, ferric subsulfate soaked cautery sticks can be used to bluntly dissect away caseous pus while aiding with hemostasis at the same time.

Sinus Surgery

Injecting the paranasal sinuses with antibiotic-saline mixtures is commonly performed. The para-nasal sinuses can be entered by injecting through the skin (lateral wall) at a site midway and slightly ventral to a point equidistant between the naris and the eye. Antibiotics injected into this area will perfuse the paranasal sinus area around the eye and can reach an area that a nasal flush may not be able to reach in a chronic case of sinusitis.

Sinus and rhinal infections are common in birds and it has been our experience that most acute or semi-acute infections will respond to nasal flushes and antibiotic therapy without involved surgery. However, in chronic cases, injecting sinuses may prove a useful adjunct to therapy.

Sinus trephination is rarely used but may be necessary if infection into the posterior nasal sinuses or paranasal sinuses has become extensive. In cases of chronic sinusitis, pus pockets or micro-abscesses may form. These areas are often not treatable with conventional antibiotic therapy due to the lack of blood perfusion. If repeated sinus flushing (nasal technique) and antibiotic therapy dictated by repeat gram stains and cultures and sensitivities fails, and other possibilities have been ruled out (i.e., allergies, foreign body particle inhalation, etc.), then sinus trephination is considered.

The purpose of sinus trephination is to create an opening to instill flushing and antibiotic solutions to an otherwise inaccessible area (usually 1:10 solutions by volume, i.e., 9.5cc Lactated Ringers and .5cc Gentamycin or other antibiotic or combination). The openings are created so that they will stay patent at least a week, which has been an effective technique for us.

The surgical technique is as follows: The patient is anesthetized with metofane by "open-drop" method (cone) or Forane by anesthetic machine to facilitate quick recovery. Do not use injectable anesthetics due to the potential bleeding that may be encountered and potential danger of blood inhalation. The surgical sites are an area about 2/5 the way between the eye and naris and dorsal to the plane of the eye. A Dremel tool is used to facilitate creating the openings, after first plucking the feathers and wiping the skin with alcohol and betadine (avoid the eyes -apply gentocin ophthalmic first). An initial incision is made over both sites, using ferric subsulfate or electrocautery to stop skin bleeding (can be a problem). The bone is exposed and the sinuses are invaded. If profuse bleeding occurs, Gel Foam packing may be used. The openings are tested for patency after first obtaining swab specimens for potential gram stains and cultures and sensitivities. Patency is tested by injecting the usual mixture (Lactated Ringers -Gentocin) into the openings. Fluid should be evident through the choanal slit. Be careful about rapidly inducing the fluid, as the periorbital tissue may swell. If this happens, absorption is rapid. The bird is allowed to recover in a dark cage. Watch carefully for post-operative bleeding and apply ferric subsulfate swabs, if necessary, to the skin and openings.

The next day, the traphination sites can be used to flush the sinuses. I will often flush the sinuses twice daily and apply an ointment afterwards, such as Gentocin Ophthalmic. The openings will seal rapidly and may require forced opening to retain patency. Once they seal, healing is rapid and usually very little scar tissue is noticeable after healing has occurred.

Air Sac Exploratory

The exploratory laparoscopy is becoming more and more useful as a diagnostic aid. In chronic respiratory disease, samples for gram stain, culture and sensitivity, or biopsy, may be taken from the air sacs directly through an abdominal incision. It has been our preference to use open drop metofane

for this procedure due to its safety, as these patients are severely compromised. However, Forane appears to be the new anesthetic of choice for the procedure. This method is usually used only if conventional diagnostic workups and antibiotic therapy have failed to solve the problem, or if radiographs have outlined an obvious granuloma or internal abscess and a direct visualization is desired.

Ruptured Air Sacs

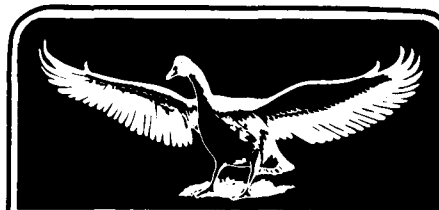
Ruptured air sacs are seen from time to time in many avian species. The etiology may be either trauma or infection. The usual treatment involves tearing the bird's skin with a large (18 ga.) needle to allow the air to escape. Many birds will heal this way and others require repeat treatments. Of course, the bird should be given the usual workup to try to determine etiology and prophylactic antibiotics are suggested, in any case. Some small birds such as budgies or canaries may assume bizarre appearances when victimized by this condition. Most will eventually heal with time (i.e., two weeks). Some cases become chronic, producing long-term or permanent "subcutaneous emphysema." In such cases, larger openings in the skin can be made and sutured open to encourage leakage of air. The air sacs may heal with time. We have not been able to successfully suture air sac tears. Harrison has described successful ligation of torn air sacs of the submandibular area in young cockatiels. He allows the birds to mature, then repairs the mature air sacs with a single ligature.

Ventriculotomy (Gizzardotomy)

We have found the ventral, midline approach the most efficacious for reaching the gizzard. After a standard preparation, a midline incision is made between the pubis and extended approximately two inches. The abdominal wall is carefully opened with scissors, taking care not to traumatize intestinal loops. After the abdominal air sacs are opened, the ventriculus is gently exteriorized using Allis tissue forceps. A small incision is made in the muscular wall of the distal gizzard and spread 0.5 inch by blunt dissection. The inside of the gizzard is easily accessible. 4-0 Dexon is used in closure.

Cloaca-pexy

This surgery is used to repair chronic prolapse of the cloaca. A midline incision is made and the cloaca is outlined by having an assistant wearing a finger cot push cloaca into the incision site. From here, it is carefully sutured to the abdominal wall using 3-0 surgical wire



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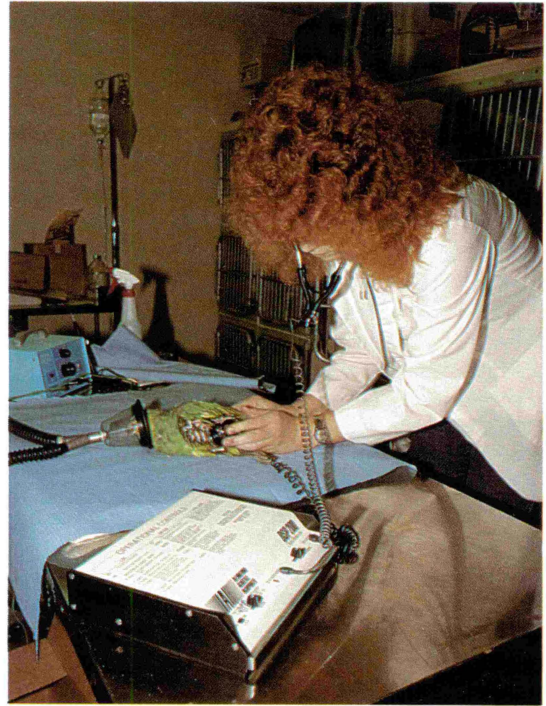
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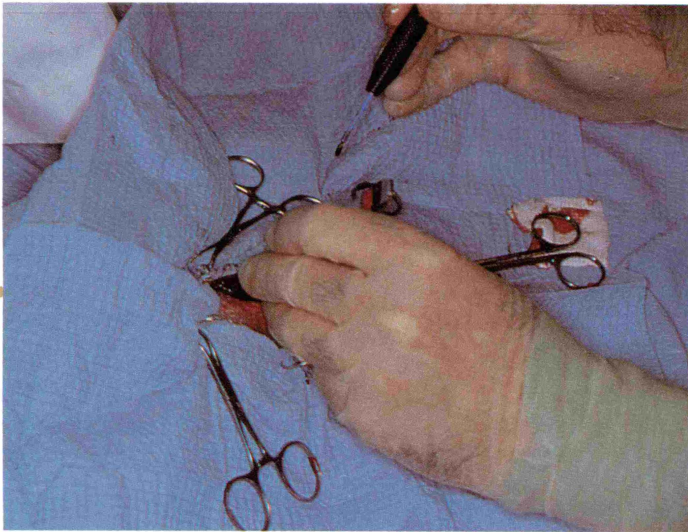
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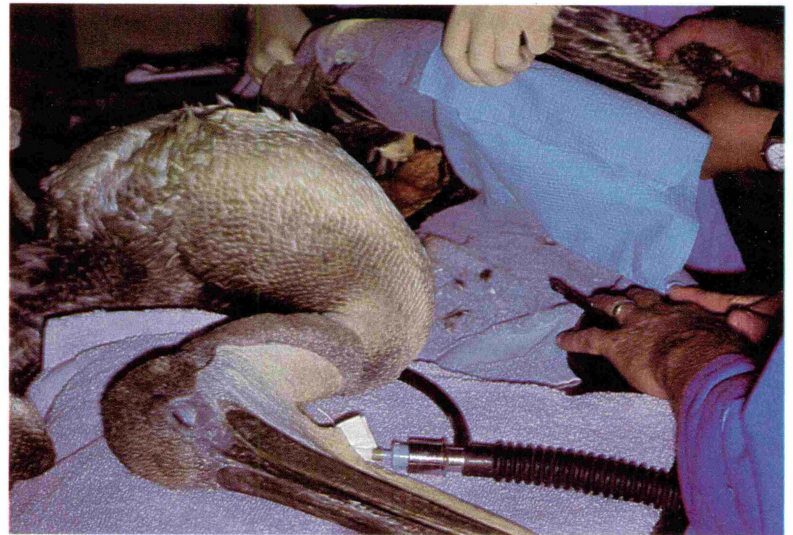
Orange-wing parrot masked down with new safe gas Forane (Isoflurane).



Sue Blake, A.H.T., monitors surgical care. Heart monitor is in the foreground.



Dr. Roskopf using the Ellman Surgitron to excise tissue in surgery.



Dr. Woerpel anesthetizes a pelican. This one swallowed a fish book.

and 3-0 Dexon in a crossing pattern. Care must be taken not to penetrate the cloacal wall.

Digestive Tract Biopsies

Biopsy techniques are becoming more and more popular. Liver biopsies are probably the most useful



Grey-cheeked parrots wrapped up following surgery to prevent wing flapping when they awake.



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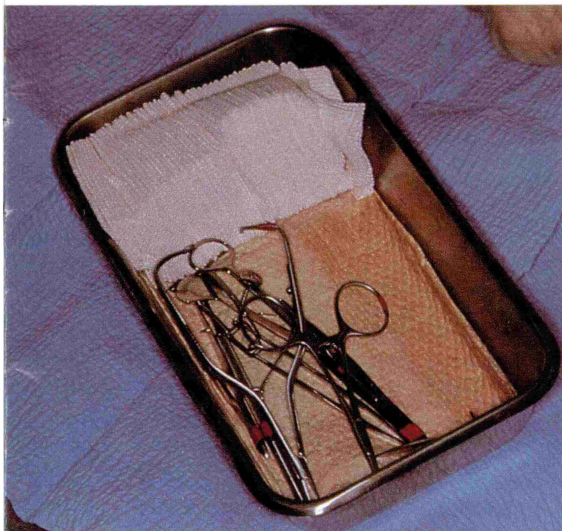


Orange-wing wakes up immediately following surgery with Forane - very desirable.

diagnostically. A midline incision is made and a wedge of liver is removed. Bleeding is usually minimal but consideration should be given to potential problems if the liver is compromised. A prophylactic injection of vitamin K₁ (1-2 mg/kg) 12-24 hours prior to biopsy may be crucial when bleeding disorders exist. Bleeding potential can be checked by plucking a few feathers prior to biopsy.

Cloacal Polyps and Growths

Cloacal growths and polyps have been seen for years in various Psittacine species. Some feel these may be of viral origin and vaccine responsive. Surgical procedures range from simple ligation and excision, electrocautery, to cryosurgery. The method of removal depends on the extent of involvement of surrounding tissues. The authors prefer electrocautery and Harrison has had success with cryosurgery. ●



Surgical instruments used in avian surgery — small ocular instruments.

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RELOCATING, MUST SELL 3 pairs s/s Blue and gold macaws \$1100 per pair, one pair Umbrella cockatoos \$1000. Call Sharon (904) 878-6325 evenings. Tallahassee, FL area.

BREEDERS SURPLUS — s/s pairs Hahns macaw \$425, Senegals \$150, Goffins \$350, Patagonians \$175, lutino hen, male/lutino \$500. Also mature male Plum head \$150, Slaty head female mature \$175, s/s Indian ringnecks '84 male/lutino \$150, lutino female \$295, mature female \$100, Jewell's Exotic Birds, L.A. (714) 595-6612.

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SCARLET CHESTED PARAKEETS, Yellow fronted kakariks, and normal and pied cockatiels. Healthy. Outdoor aviary raised. Unrelated pairs. 1984 hatch. San Diego. Will ship. Phone: (619) 287-7353.

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HYACINTH MACAW AND GRAND ECLECTUS BABIES: 2 mo. to 1½ years old, domestically bred and handfed. Reservations accepted for future babies. Po Kim, New York City, Phone: (212) 673-0437.

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WHITE FACED cockatiels, breeding age. Phone 'Gladys', (313) 682-2205, Pontiac, Michigan.

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