

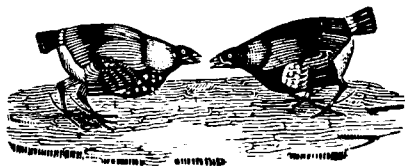
Dear Mr. Dingle:

On behalf of the American Cockatiel Society, I wish to express our sincere thanks to you and the staff of AFA Watchbird for presenting my notice of the 1st National Cockatiel Specialty Show in its entirety, and in a most attractive format. The support and goodwill shown ACS by AFA and other avicultural organizations is deeply appreciated by all the members.

On a more personal note, I would like to express my appreciation for your excellent magazine. I look forward to each issue and particularly enjoy your editorial comments — you have a flair for witty, amusing answers as well as solid information. In my Apr/May issue, referring to the letter signed F.J.A., Islip, New York, I can only say that I would consider it a great pleasure and honor if I had the privilege of meeting this person. To his letter and your very apropos answer, I will only add a hearty "Amen."

Best regards and keep up the good work.

Sincerely,  
Jo Hall  
ACS Show Co-ordinator



In response to  
**PERILS OF BUYING  
IMPORTED BIRDS**  
Dec/Jan '78 Watchbird  
by Dr. R. Baer

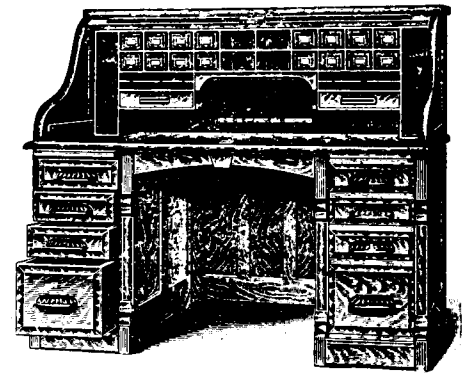
Dear Sir:

I read with interest Dr. Baer's article "The Perils of Buying Imported Birds" in the Dec./Jan. WATCHBIRD. I'm afraid I cannot agree with him totally, neither in regard to the causes of the problems, nor the solutions.

I agree that it is a shame when someone's collection of birds dies as a result of exposure to a new bird, but, to intro-

# From The Editor's Desk

by Sheldon Dingle



duce a recently acquired bird into an aviary without careful evaluation of the bird as well as further quarantine, is not a wise thing to do.

I also feel it is not fair to blame all the disease problems on importers and smugglers. How long do you think an importer would stay in business if no one bought his birds? It is the aviculturist who is looking for the "barbain" bird who aggravates some of these problems, by not being willing to pay for proper evaluation of the bird's health.

If a bird were to be kept an additional thirty days following the quarantine, the cost would be increased by 65 cents per day, or approximately \$20.00 per bird.

If you wanted to continue to the extreme to guarantee a healthy bird, one needs to do the following on each:

1. Complete physical examination.
2. Complete parasitic examination.
  - a. Blood.
    - (1) Smear.
    - (2) Flotation.
  - b. Feces
3. Bacteriological examination.
  - a. Salmonella titer.
  - b. Gram stain.
  - c. Culture & sensitivity. (Ten days on the indicated drug.) (The most common problem in parrots, for example, is pseudomonas, which is sensitive only to the most expensive injectible antibiotics.)
4. Virus studies.

(It is very difficult to guarantee a bird to be virus free — even Newcastle's has been carried by a healthy parrot for several hundred days; there may be carrier birds of Pacheco's.)
5. Paired blood samples on each psittacine to be sent to the Hooper Foundation Lab for psittacosis titers OR putting the bird on tetracycline for 45 days.

6. Parasite treatments. (Some are very difficult to treat, for example, blood parasites.)

All of the above would add greatly to the cost of the bird, and most aviculturists would not pay it, even if it meant more of a guarantee of a healthy bird.

Dr. Baer inferred in the article that dealers would unload known sick birds as soon as possible no matter what the consequences might be to the avicultural society. My experience has been that dealers are becoming more conscientious as the competition becomes keener.

Perhaps it is the A.F.A.'s responsibility to help in this endeavor, by refusing to accept advertising from dealers who knowingly release sick birds to market. Perhaps a program of inspection and certification of approval could be set up to help police the industry from within.

The individual aviculturist can get involved in a positive way by:

1. Letting suppliers know that they are only going to settle for healthy birds and they will be willing to pay for them.
2. Work together as a group to certify dealers and eliminate advertising in the Watchbird of un reputable dealers.
3. Financially contribute to research on avian diseases.
4. Work more closely with avian veterinarians to establish preventative programs.
5. Patronize the best suppliers — offer club recognition, awards, etc.
6. Set up an additional 30-day quarantine before introducing a new bird into a collection.

I definitely feel that it is not wise to expect the USDA or APHIS to solve our problems — we need less government intervention, not more. (It certainly is not realistic to expect a 90 days' overseas quarantine to be enforced.) Good import-

ers are now holding birds for 30 days overseas anyway. We should become so conscientious as an industry that we can police ourselves far more effectively.

By their own admission, the Federal agencies are not set up to regulate caged and aviary birds. Even Dr. Baer spoke out against the USDA in the VVND outbreak last year.

However, I agree that we should be represented on the U.S.A.H.A. and that we should enforce the Code of Ethics. I feel the A.F.A. should follow steps initiated by the First International Symposium on Captive Birds held in Seattle, March 7-12, 1978, where they agreed to publish a list of guilty smugglers and their affiliation.

I also agree on being more selective in our breeding programs. Each of us should choose a problem species and concentrate our best efforts on breeding that.

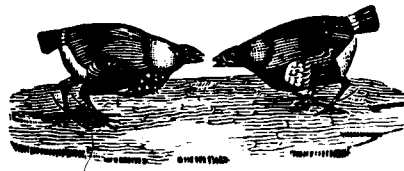
At this time, veterinary health certificates for each bird would be very difficult to implement. The primary reason is that there are very few veterinarians qualified to diagnose a bird's condition of health. For example, the 1978 graduating class of a leading veterinary school in the South only had a one-day course on caged birds. They would hardly be considered qualified unless they went on to get some experience on their own.

This whole letter boils down to the fact that we as aviculturists can upgrade the profession of aviculture ourselves and eliminate these perils of buying imported birds. We can set up a program of licensing or certification of club members according to aviculture expertise; we can discourage certain species of birds from being imported if they prove to be disease carriers; we can follow the example of the pet industry group ("PIJAC") and IBI (International Bird Institute) and donate money to help solve the problems. These two groups have given some \$50,000 to three institutions to study the diagnosis and prevention of psittacosis and Pacheco's disease.

So, in summary, the government should not be asked to "solve" our problems, but we should solve our own by being smarter, practicing disease prevention in our own aviaries like we want the dealers to do, spending money on known healthy birds, reporting the "clean dealers" so they can be exalted, and pay our fair share of the research need to solve this many-faceted problem of bird importation.

We can do it if we do it together!

Sincerely yours,  
Greg G. Harrison. D.V.M.



Dear Editor:

It is extremely unfortunate that Dr. Richard Baer was allowed to write such a biased article on importers of tropical birds. To put all dealers into the same category is not only naive, but an insult to every educated aviculturist in this country. Dr. Baer's insistence to group all importers together will only increase the problems at hand instead of alleviating them. If we are to be grouped with smugglers, fly-by-nights, and disreputable dealers; why then should we spend the extra money and time to install a lab to run cultures in our quarantine station, or hire a vet and trained technicians to run our stations. There are far too few dealers in the U.S. who care. These dealers should be praised, not insulted and maligned. Why is it so difficult for this industry to come out against dealers known to sell inferior or smuggled stock. We continually get calls from breeders and stores who have received sick, dying, or dead birds. We believe it is necessary to identify these dealers and stop trying to keep their identity a secret, for some unknown reason.

Dr. Baer made some other rather misleading or misrepresenting statements which we feel should be answered.

To infer that Psittacosis, or any other bird disease for that matter is strictly confined to imports is again naive. There have been instances of Psittacosis in parakeets coming out of Texas on more than one occasion. As we all know, Newcastle's Disease can be acquired from many types of domestic poultry or fowl.

Aviculturists must be educated to the fact that there is usually a direct correlation between diseased birds and the price paid. It is no wonder that an uneducated breeder will have trouble with a Mexican or Amazon Parrot when he only pays \$50-60. One would think that a breeder would be more concerned with the quality of his stock and where he is getting it; than how cheap he can buy it. Dr. Baer finally agreed with this philosophy halfway through his rhetorically tedious article. If these unscrupulous dealers did not have an outlet for their "CHEAP" birds, they would not be in business. It costs a great deal more to quarantine a bird properly, in a good facility, and this normally shows itself in a dealers price structure.

Dr. Baer asks, "What can the aviculturist do?", and then goes on to say, "frank-

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ly very little." How very unfortunate that he thinks that 20,000 and more aviculturists can not take care of their own problems. Dr. Baer's solution seems to be more government controls and more government agencies involved. This will only mean more red tape to get good birds, higher bird prices, and higher taxes to pay for these new committees and agencies. When there is a VVND outbreak we not only pay for birds senselessly lost, but we pay for the government employees involved. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we all sat back and let the government subject us to indiscriminate controls, higher taxes, and higher bird prices; then told us they couldn't control the situation, so importation was going to be stopped? Don't we have enough government controls in our lives, isn't aviculture supposed to be fun?

Dr. Baer stated that the A.F.A. should "mount a campaign," requesting the Deputy Director of the U.S.D.A. to seek authorization to protect the U. S. bird industry from exposure to diseases." Agreed, the A.F.A. should mount a campaign, but against the disreputable dealers. Print their names in this publication with proof of their sales of diseased birds. The U.S. Government's job could be simplified, not intensified and we could all gain the satisfaction of having helped ourselves. Finally, Dr. Baer states that whenever possible, birds should be purchased from breeders. That's a good idea if extreme inbreeding and severe limitations on types of birds available, is the desired goal. If new blood is not desired, why then is there such a demand for new breeding stock in species such as English Budgies, Finches, and Cockatiels. Granted breeding programs need to be upgraded; but they must be upgraded from time to time with good healthy imported stock. If not, severe limitations will be the result.

Dr. Baer would like the buyers to insist on a health certificate, signed by an accredited Vet. The question here is are there enough qualified Vets in the country to examine a bird properly, and is the buyer prepared to accept yet another price increase? In addition, this cannot positively ascertain the health of the bird.

The problem of disease control will not be solved by any amount of rhetoric. It is a problem that must be solved by the workings of every dedicated aviculturist. The only way we can all really enjoy our birds is to internally solve our problems. It would perhaps be a good idea to license bird dealers, such as they do for small animals dealers, and have their operations inspected not only by the U.S.D.A., but by the state A.F.A. coordinators, as well.

The coordinators could then publish their ill findings in the Watchbird. It is very important to stop hiding and protecting these dealers who are selling diseased and inferior birds. Disgrace them, not only under their business name but also personally. The A.F.A. should publish, monthly, a list of all known smugglers and disreputable dealers, along with the proof of their misdealings.

We at Novak's are importers, who are dedicated aviculturists, and WE really do give a damn. We were not only outraged, but each of us was personally offended. Watchbird should not continue to allow all importers to be put into one category. **WE ARE NOT ALL THE SAME.**

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Bob & Cathy Novak  
Al Larson

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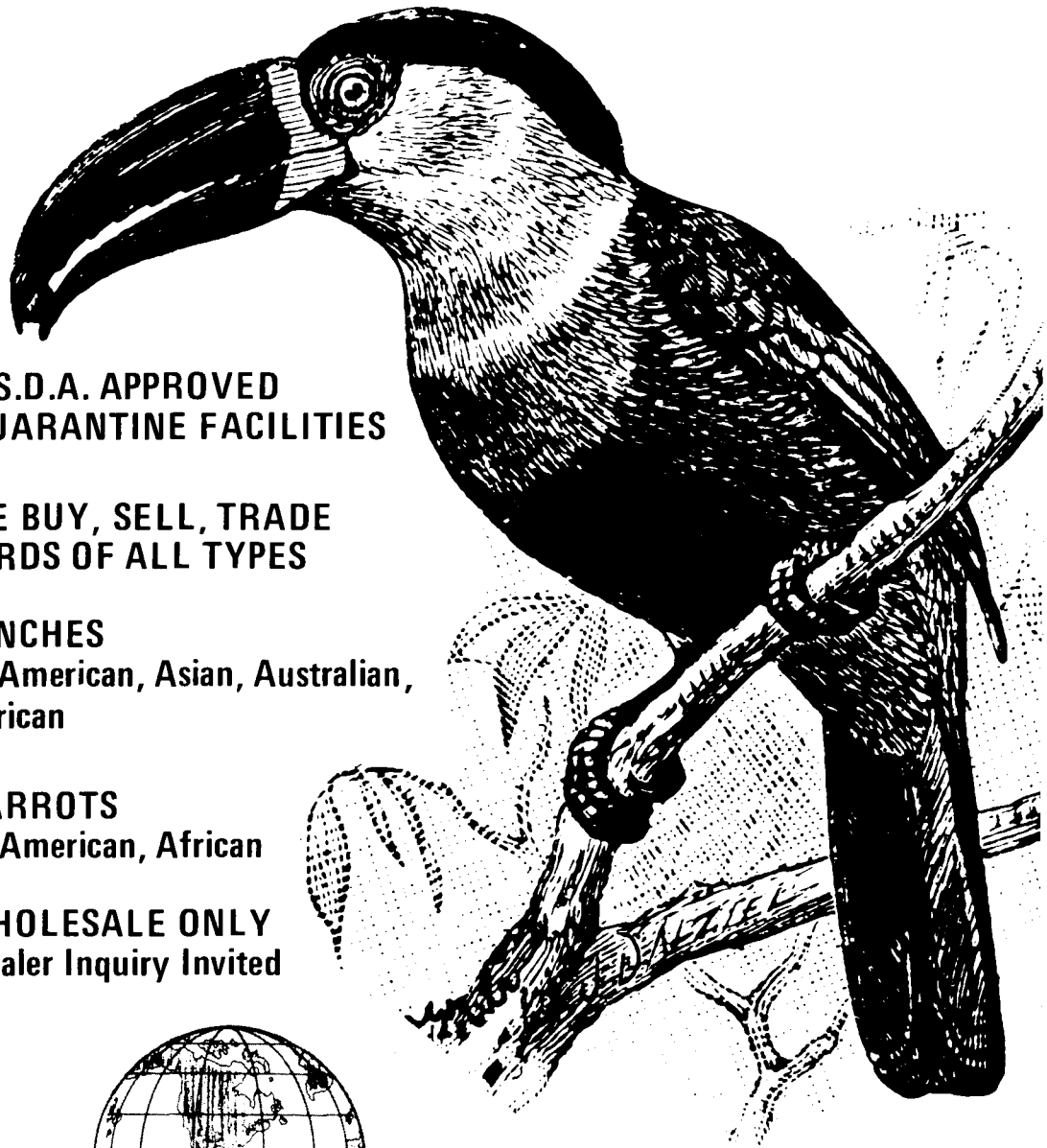
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