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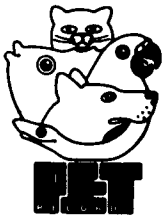


the Perils of Buying Imported Birds

**U.S.D.A. CAN DO NOTHING
TO ASSURE THAT
IMPORTED BIRDS ARE HEALTHY**

**MOST IMPORTERS WILL DO
NOTHING TO ASSURE THAT
IMPORTED BIRDS ARE HEALTHY**

*by Richard E. Baer, D.V.M.
Groveport, Ohio*



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Some days ago I received a phone call from an A.F.A. member to inform me that some recently imported parrots, which the member had purchased, died. The owner was not too alarmed as she felt the birds would be replaced by the importer.

They were sent to the local veterinarian for necropsy.

A few days later the now alarmed member called again to report that more birds were dying. These were brought down to the State Diagnostic Laboratory.

This call was followed by the distressing information that the daughter's pet White Crown Parrot, "Baby", had died. Each day brought the sad news of more deaths — a Blue Fronted, an African Grey, another Blue Fronted, a Blue & Gold Macaw, a Yellow Fronted, a Quaker and a Half Moon, another Yellow Fronted, a Mealy Amazon and another Blue & Gold Macaw, a Yellow Fronted, the family pet "Reggie" — an Orange Cheeked Amazon, a female breeding Hyacinth Macaw, and it appears that almost the entire parrot population of the aviary will die.

The laboratory diagnosis: Pacheco's Parrot Disease.

This is but one of many incidences of such sad losses over the past year.

Two other breeders in the midwest lost thousands of dollars worth of valuable birds to this dread killer. One in the northwest experienced the same tragedy,

including the anguish of losing his pet of many years, a cockatoo; and, most of us are acquainted with the disaster which this disease caused in 1974 in Florida in a valuable bird population there.

In most of these cases the story is the same: Imported birds were purchased out of quarantine — placed in aviaries — disaster — Pacheco's Parrot Disease.

A few months ago a pet shop owner purchased some imported Yellow Fronted and Orange Winged Parrots out of quarantine. Some of the birds appeared to have a cold, so the owner's life took them home for treatment. Isolation was in a separate room. She had other parrots. They developed respiratory problems; she, a conjunctivitis. Diagnosis on both parrots and owner: Psittacosis.

This case history seems to be coming commonplace.

What can be done?

The fact that a dealer advertises "U.S.D.A. Approved Quarantine Facilities", "Government Approved", "U.S.D.A. Inspected", or makes any other reference to official inspection is no guarantee that you will receive healthy birds.

YOU BUY COMPLETELY AT YOUR OWN RISK AND TO YOUR OWN PERIL!

U.S.D.A. surveillance and release of birds from a quarantine station means only that they have passed the prescribed period of quarantine required by



Photo Submitted by Dr. Richard Baer.

Victims of Pacheco's Parrot Disease.

law and that no positive evidence was found to indicate that the birds were infected with Exotic Newcastle Disease (VVND). This is usually a pretty good assurance that the birds are free from V.V.N.D., but U.S.D.A. does not even warrant this to be true.

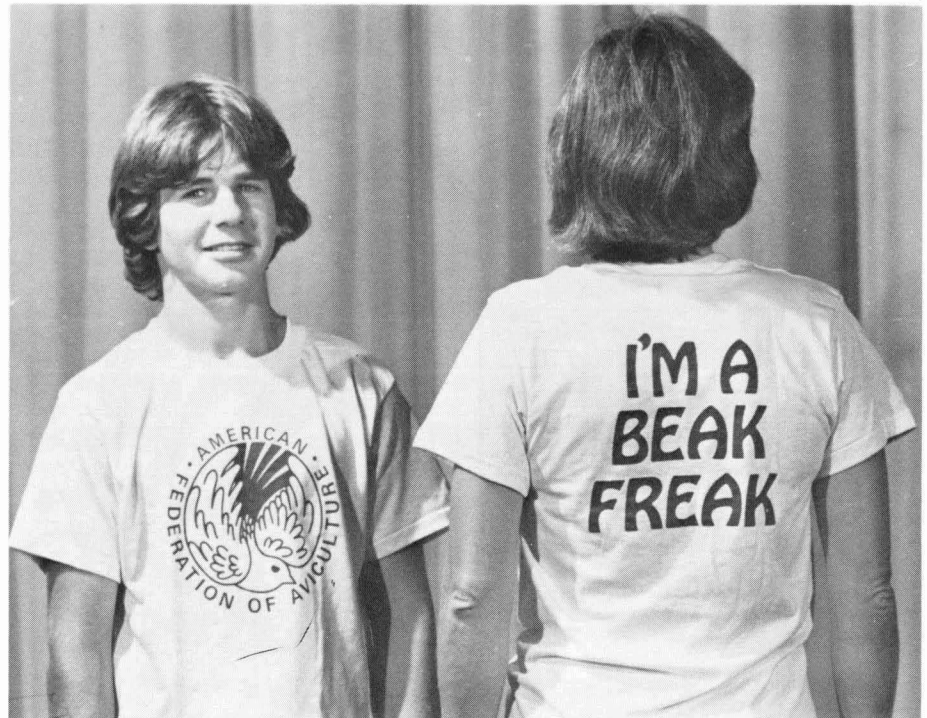
U.S.D.A. (Veterinary Services) has no authorization to inspect for any other avian diseases at the quarantine facility other than V.V.N.D. Therefore, Veterinary Services cannot certify that the birds purchased by you when released by them from quarantine are free from dangerously contagious or infectious disease or known exposure thereto.

In fact, sick birds infected with dangerously contagious diseases ARE FOUND on inspection. Once the possibility of V.V.N.D. has been eliminated, Veterinary Services, at the present time, can do nothing about it; and after quarantine release these birds, some exposed, some even in the incubative stage of the disease, are sold to unsuspecting buyers.

Hemolytic viruses and other pathogens have been found on culture at the Federal Laboratory indicating a serious problem, and still the dealer is free to peddle these birds and perhaps destroy a breeder's entire aviary so long as no evidence of V.V.N.D. was found.

This is no fault of Veterinary Services. They cannot exceed the limits of their authority. Their hands are tied. They do not like this situation any more

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than the aviculturist does.

What about the dealer's (importer's) responsibility?

Is he going to voluntarily keep these sick and/or exposed birds off the market or is he going to unload them as quickly as he can before he has any more losses?

The answer to that question I leave to your imagination.

What is the value of such advertising by dealers that "all birds are healthy", "all birds shipped in good health", etc.? What are the guarantees? Will any dealer guarantee more than live arrival? (Some will not go even this far.) Will he replace and cover your losses caused by birds exposed while on his premises to contagious disease and/or those in the incubative stage of the disease which sicken once in your aviary and infect and destroy your collection? What about carriers?

Once again, I repeat: **YOU BUY COMPLETELY AT YOUR OWN RISK AND TO YOUR OWN PERIL!**

What can the aviculturist do to surmount this imminent danger of the distribution of his aviary every time he purchases imported birds? Frankly, very little!

What can the American Federation of Aviculture do? We can and should do something?

ONE: The Code of Federal Regulations, Title 9, administered by Veterinary Services, contains the U.S.D.A.'s regulations to prevent the introduction of foreign animal disease into the United States, with the stated purpose that the Department is required to prevent the introduction of any communicable disease whether it is exotic or not. Animals governed by these import regulations include poultry and "all other species of birds" (A.P.H.I.S. Bulletin 91-18, revised June, 1977). Even dogs are not allowed entry into this country if they do not appear to be in good health, have been exposed to dead or sick animals or are in unsanitary containers. (Information provided to A.S.P.C.A. by U.S. Gov. and contained in their bulletin on pet imports.)

A.F.A. should mount a campaign by having its membership, through signed petitions or letters, request the Deputy Director of Veterinary Services to seek authorization under existing U.S.D.A. Import Regulations to protect the U.S. Bird Industry from exposure to danger-

ously contagious diseases being imported into this country, namely Pacheco's Parrot Disease and Psittacosis in addition to Exotic Newcastle Disease.

The ravishes of these exotic diseases are costing the U.S. Bird Industry hundreds of thousands of dollars. In addition, one is a public health problem and another is a menace to the poultry industry.

Psittacosis should come under the primary jurisdiction of U.S.D.A. (Veterinary Services) rather than U.S. Public Health, because it is primarily an animal disease although contagious to humans.

Veterinary Services has done an outstanding job in the control and eradication of other animal diseases contagious to man such as bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis. They would do an outstanding job with Psittacosis, too.

The strong backing of the Deputy Director by A.F.A. is essential if he is to be successful in attaining the needed authority.

Political support should be given the Director by our members writing to their Congressional representatives petitioning them to see that our interests are protected under U.S.D.A. import regulations.

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	per 250 Gram container	per one teaspoonful (approx. 5 Grams)
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Vitamin D	46,900 USP	938 USP
Vitamin B-1	440 mg	8.8 mg
Vitamin B-2	330 mg	6.6 mg
Vitamin B-6	330 mg	6.6 mg
Vitamin B-12	3,580 mcg	71.6 mcg
Vitamin E	2,885 IU	57.7 IU
Vitamin K	13 mg	0.26 mg
Niacin	2,200 mg	44.0 mg
d-pantothenic acid	220 mg	4.4 mg
Folic acid	10 mg	0.2 mg
Rutin	10 mg	0.2 mg
Biotin	240 mcg	4.8 mcg
Calcium	8,000 mg	160.0 mg
Phosphorous	6,000 mg	120.0 mg
Iodine	0.0088%	40 mg
Iron	0.79 %	1,980 mg
Zinc	0.08 %	190 mg
Copper	0.028 %	70 mg
Manganese	0.07 %	176 mg
Magnesium		50 mg
Sulfur		8,750 mg
Capsicum		2,500 mg
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Methionine	4,400 mg	88.0 mg
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Serine	8,000 mg	160.0 mg
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Tyrosine	8,100 mg	162.0 mg
Valine	2,950 mg	59.0 mg

DIRECTIONS: One-tenth of bird's daily food intake. For example, for a bird weighing 1 lb., place ¼ teaspoonful (approx. 1½ grams) in the bird's feed. Smaller or larger birds, use proportionately. Beautiful results will be noticed in 30 days!

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Perhaps A.F.A. should even reconsider its attitude toward stricter regulations on imported birds at this time.

Last January, U.S.D.A. proposed in the Federal Register that all birds exported to the U.S. be certified that they have been in the country of certification for not less than 90 days and that they have been kept separate from all other avian populations for the 30 days prior to export to the U.S.

At that time A.F.A. was opposed to the proposal on the grounds that such a procedure would require a de facto quarantine facility to be set up in countries of export to the U.S., which would dry up the supply of birds coming into the U.S. or drive prices of birds imported to levels beyond the reach of most people.

Stricter import regulations need be evaluated. Which is better, a more expensive healthy bird or a sick one at bargain prices which could cause the loss of our whole aviary?

I would prefer birds entering the country after proper quarantine, properly identified and accompanied by a valid official health certificate, certifying that they have passed the prescribed period of isolation, that during that period they were free from any visible symptoms of dangerously contagious or infectious disease or known exposure thereto, including specifically Exotic Newcastle Disease, Pacheco's Parrot Disease and Psittacosis; and certifying further that they were transported in clean and disinfected containers without exposure to any other birds enroute.

This is how other classes of animals enter the country.

TWO: A.F.A. officially and through its membership should seek participation in the United States Animal Health Association.

The U.S.A.H.A. was organized many years ago, first as the Interstate Assoc. of Livestock Sanitary Boards, and later as the United States Livestock Sanitary Assoc., for the purpose of the study of sanitary science and the dissemination of information and methods pertaining to the control and eradication of infectious diseases among livestock. Its membership is open to regulatory personnel (State and Federal) and to any person interested in livestock sanitation.

In 1968 the name was changed to U.S.A.H.A. with the expanded purpose of developing preventative animal disease programs and concepts, to cope with the ordeal of preventing and controlling the entrance of foreign animal diseases into this country, and to protect the animal health of the nation. Its scope was broadened and it now has committees on such

matters as, Foreign Animal Diseases, Diseases of Poultry, Wild & Marine Life Diseases and a committee on "Zoological Gardens".

U.S.A.H.A. should have a committee that considers the disease problems of our segment of animal industry, and A.F.A. and interested aviculturists should be represented on such a committee.

This would provide a national forum for the study of cage and aviary bird diseases and provide better liaison with both Federal and State Regulatory Officials, which is so sorely needed.

THREE: A.F.A. should come out loud and clear on its code of ethics: "It is the official policy of A.F.A. to disqualify or expel from advertising or membership any applicant or member who has been convicted of violation of any state or federal law concerning the importation, interstate shipment, possession or humane treatment of any avian species." All members and advertisers should be made well aware of this code of ethics and A.F.A.'s determination to enforce it.

As was so aptly stated in a recent letter to our president from the Deputy Director of V.S.: "The smuggling of birds into the United States and their distribution by bird dealers to retail outlets across the country are potentially the most explosive disease dangers faced today by the domestic poultry and caged bird industries."

Investigations into recent outbreaks of V.V.N.D. by V.S. have shown that in all likelihood smuggling was involved and it was indicated that in some cases established dealers of cage-birds may have been drop-off points.

Such smuggled birds can not only bring in V.V.N.D., but Pacheco's Parrot Disease, Psittacosis and a myriad of other destructive diseases! A.F.A. and its membership can and should be the most effective force in combating this menace.

A.F.A. should advise its membership to report all birds which they suspect were smuggled. Suspicion may be aroused by the bird being of a class that could not have come into the country legally (i.e. native to countries with a ban on exportation, young hand fed birds, etc.) or that are offered at a below market price. On the slightest suspicion, whatsoever, A.F.A. should urge its members to use the "hot-line", (301) 436-8061 and report the suspicion.

We must protect our own interests! Smuggled birds are no bargain and any A.F.A. member who purchases such a suspect bird places himself in the jeopardy of being subject to the penalty of A.F.A.'s code of ethics.

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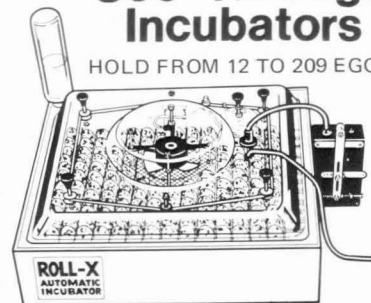
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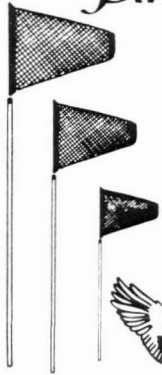
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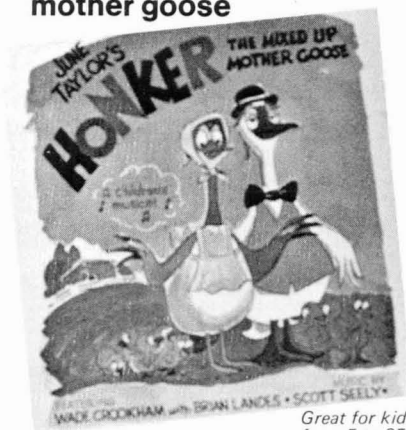
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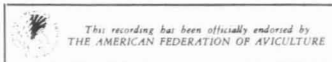
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What can the individual aviculturist do to protect himself from the perils of diseased birds?

Whenever possible, birds should be purchased from reputable breeders with closed collections where the health status of the aviary of origin is known.

With the less exotic species, the conception that wild caught birds must be periodically imported and introduced into the flocks to "provide new blood" is unfounded. When has it been necessary to introduce wild caught canaries, budgerigars or Zebra Finches into these fancies to improve them? What is needed is more selective and better breeding practices by the aviculturist.

The goal of A.F.A. is propagation and conservation through captive breeding programs so that we will not always be dependent on importations.

Granted, at this time, our captive breeding programs with some of the more exotic and rarer species are still dependent on importations. When buying such importations through a dealer, more guarantees of health should be forthcoming.

The buyer should insist on a guarantee in writing, with proof, that he is purchasing a legally imported bird. Imported bird(s) should be accompanied by a proper health certificate signed by an Accredited Veterinarian certifying that the entire shipment of birds was actually examined by him and found to be free from dangerously contagious or infectious disease or known exposure thereto.

Some such written certification as follows should be made by the Accredited Veterinarian on a health certificate: "This is to certify that the birds identified above, together with all other birds on the premises of origin, were inspected by me on this date and found to be free

from evidence of communicable disease and insofar as can be determined, exposure thereto, including, but not limited to, Exotic Newcastle Disease, Pacheco's Parrot Disease, and Psittacosis."

Accredited Veterinarians who falsely certify to a healthy paper stand to lose their accreditation status if such falsification can be proven.

If the aviculturist is convinced that a dealer or individual has knowingly sold him a diseased or disease exposed bird, he might consider a civil law suit for damaged, not only for monetary damages involved, but also for the damage in mental anguish occasioned by the loss of his birds. In this instance it would be advantageous to subpoena the health records of the facility and of the federal inspector to prove that the seller had prior knowledge that his birds were sick or exposed to sick birds before sale.

Regardless of the possibility of increased control by U.S.D.A. of dangerously contagious avian diseases, of more stringent import regulations, of greater suppression of smuggling and of more responsibility on the part of the dealer, the introduction of a new bird into the aviary is always fraught with risk. The most single important measure that the individual aviculturist can take to lessen this risk is ISOLATION of all newly acquired birds. Failure to quarantine all newly acquired birds for at least thirty days is to invite disaster. When sick birds are found in quarantine, seek professional veterinary help immediately.

The best method of quarantine is on a separate premise where the newly arrived birds have no exposure to other birds and where they are attended by someone who has no contact with any other birds. No clothing, equipment or tools should leave this quarantine place until they have

continued on page 38

EDITORS NOTE:

This article presents some of Dr. Baer's astute thoughts regarding problems connected with imported birds. He also presents his well-thought-out proposals to remedy some of those problems.

The A.F.A., however, has not formulated an attitude or policy regarding commercial traffic in birds. No doubt, there are many positions that can be taken.

Mr. Frank Zamrock of Joy Bird Imports has agreed to respond to Dr. Baer's article and the Watchbird editorial staff is interested in your response also. The most cogent and articulate responses will appear in the next issue of the magazine. Please mail your thoughts to Editor, P.O. Box 340, Norco, CA 91760.

THE PERILS OF BUYING IMPORTED BIRDS *contd from page 16*

been thoroughly cleaned and properly disinfected. No visitors should be allowed.

(Some clubs may want to consider such a quarantine facility as a club operated project.)

If the above best method is impossible, then quarantining the birds for at least a month on an isolated part of an aviary premise is in order as next best. Here, again, a separate attendant, who has no contact with other birds, separate equipment, and "off-limits" to everyone else are required. This separate attendant can be a member of the family who will take care of the quarantined birds during the isolation period, shower each time after taking care of them, and who will stay completely away from the aviary proper during this time.

If the aviculturist must take care of the quarantined birds himself, either on the separate premises or on an isolated part of his aviary premises, he should do this last after taking care of all of the needs of his aviary. This is much less satisfactory than any of the two previous procedures and he must be meticulous in seeing that no possible contagium is carried from the quarantine facility to the aviary proper.

Nothing must be taken from the quarantine facility. Disposable head wear, coveralls (long sleeves preferred), and rubber boots (high enough to tuck coverall legs in) should be used when servicing the quarantine facility. After service, boots should be cleaned and disinfected, inside and out, with an approved disinfectant on leaving and left there for next day's use. Remove coveralls only in clean plastic bags for laundry before reuse. Wash hands, fingernails and arms in disinfectant, take a shower and wash hair, and dress in clean clothes before returning to the aviary proper.

The least satisfactory form of isolation would be in quarters (a separate room) not apart from the aviary proper. If this is the only way possible, strictly following the instructions in the paragraph above may possibly help to avoid spread of contagious disease if such disease should exist in the newly purchased birds.

To buy new birds from any source and put them directly into the aviary is asking for trouble and sooner or later trouble will occur.

The purchasing of new birds, especially imported birds, will always be accompanied with risk.

THE VET'S CORNER Parasitic Diseases *contd from page 29*

applied, this system may be easier, but it may not be 100% effective. The dosage of the drug is critical and a slight overdose will kill. For this reason, I won't publish the dosage in this sort of general article. If you still want to try it, I will tell you how to proceed personally. It should also be repeated several times.

Some experienced breeders swear by the use of hargate spray. I have only word of mouth confirmation of its effectiveness, but it is worthy of consideration.

IV. Mosquitoes, flies, lice and fleas are insects which may carry several kinds of diseases, including parasitic, bacterial, and viral, in addition to causing damage by themselves. If it is at all possible to exclude these insects from the environment, many problems may be avoided, such as malaria and canary pox.

Unfortunately, there is no single procedure or drug which will solve all of your problems. Each parasite has its own peculiar habits and susceptibilities and must be approached with full knowledge of its weaknesses. Your own veterinarian can often be very helpful to you in achieving and maintaining a parasite free flock. You will also find many fine books and magazine articles on the subject which will help you.

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