

Veterinary Viewpoints

edited by Amy Worell, D.V.M.
Woodland Hills, California

Question #1: My lorikeet has been having difficulty passing stool for a long time. It moves its tail vigorously while it is trying to pass stool. I provide it with sunflower seeds, safflower seeds, and baby cereal every day. I also offer fruit three to four times a week. I have taken it to several veterinarians but they are not familiar with birds. What procedures or tests should I have them run?

L. Crimson, Hong Kong

Answer #1: Birds that have difficulty passing stool and demonstrate the straining that you have described can have a number of problems. One of the most common reasons for this type of difficulty in defecating occurs during egg laying. When the egg is being delivered into the cloaca from

the oviduct, the bird will strain until the egg has passed. Because the colon is being displaced by the egg, the feces cannot be delivered into the cloaca until the egg has passed. Additionally, potential other causes of straining include:

- any space occupying lesion such as a tumor can create the same problem.
- problems associated with the thickening of the lining of the cloaca can also cause this type of difficulty.
- any obstruction in the intestinal tract is another reason for this type of clinical presentation.
- the consumption of excessive amounts of grit and gravel causing complete or partial obstruction of the gizzard can also cause this type of symptomatology.

A complete physical examination, which includes exploration of the cloaca with an otoscope or laparoscope, and possibly radiographic examination, is necessary to develop a differential diagnosis. If possible, it would be advisable to consult with a veterinarian who has avian experience.

Robert B. Altman, D.V.M.
Franklin Square, NY

Answer #2: I would suggest that you find a veterinarian with experience in treating birds. Your lorikeet needs a proper physical examination, including examination of the vent (anus) and cloaca (the portion of the intestinal, urinary, and reproductive tracts where waste is stored before it is passed). If no structural problem is found, then laboratory tests for bacteria, yeast, and parasites would be in order. If that does not identify the cause, radiographs (X-rays) and other procedures would be advisable. You should consider improving the bird's diet. Lorikeets in nature are nectar feeders. There are special diets that are commercially available for these interesting birds which are semi-solid to liquid in consistency. This will create more of a cleaning problem

for you but may solve the bird's difficulty in passing its droppings.

James M. Harris, D.V.M.
Oakland, CA

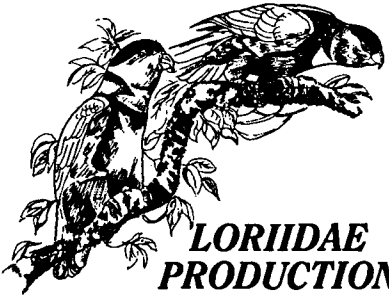
Answer #3: Finding one's self in a situation such as yours, where one has a bird in need of veterinary care, but a veterinarian with knowledge of avian patients is not available, is also a problem realized here in the States. Probably your first step would be to locate a veterinarian in your area that is willing to work with you in learning about avian medicine. The second step would be to obtain a European or American veterinary publication, such as a textbook, to aid in this process. Hopefully, the two of you would then be better equipped to aid your avian friend. A complete physical examination should be conducted first. If physical abnormalities are noted, than those should be addressed. If not, routine screening tests such as blood work, a fecal parasite examination, and microbiological assays of the cloaca, should be considered. Further diagnostics might include radiographs and an exploratory surgery. Good luck with your lorikeet!

Amy B. Worell, D.V.M.
West Hills, CA

Question #2: I have a problem with my pearl lutino cockatiel. He is alert, has good plumage, is very talkative, has good eating habits, and is playful. He has had a sagging eyelid, somewhat like a Basset hound's eyes, for a long time. I have taken him to three different avian veterinarians and he still is no better. He has had three blood tests, which were all negative. He has had cream placed in his eye which did not help, he was on oral Vibramycin for two months which seemed to take some of the sagging away but not completely, and then he was placed on a powder medication for eight months. The third vet also took a swab of the eyes and gave him a vitamin A injection. Nothing has helped, so I have just let it be. I notice now that he is turning slightly more yellow. What should I do?

H. Kaminski, Ontario, Canada

Answer #1: Lutino cockatiels are yellow. If the yellow color is intensifying in the feathers, it may be quite normal. Age and diet can affect plumage. Additives can also affect color if



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given while the feathers are forming during a moult. I wonder what the "powder medication" was that you gave for eight months? Regarding the eye, the sagging eyelid might be indicative of nerve damage secondary to trauma. It might be appropriate to get copies of all the records and test results from the three veterinarians you have consulted with in the past and choose one of them or another avian veterinarian to review the case and check your bird.

James M. Harris, D.V.M.
Oakland, CA

Answer #2: The sagging eyelid which you describe is probably related to some event in the past that has damaged the nerve or muscles in that region. After a prolonged period such as you have described, I suspect that the eyelid will remain as it is, apparently without harm to the bird. Probably your best course of action, at this point, would be to monitor the eye and eyelid for any additional changes and, if noted, seek veterinary care at that point. In regards to the change in coloration you have noted in your cockatiel's feathers, this possibly could be due to a number of causes. Factors such as genetics, dietary influence, and environment all could be involved. Additionally, abnormalities in the bird's health, such as those involving the liver, are also a possibility. I would suggest you consider a physical examination and a blood test including a bile acid test, by your avian veterinarian.

Amy Worell, D.V.M.
West Hills, CA

Answer #3: The cause of the sagging eyelid could certainly be the result of an injury to the nerve controlling that eyelid. In some cases, nerve damage will heal over a very long period of time; in some instances nerve damage can be irreparable. Unless there are problems such as drying of or irritation to the cornea, the sagging eyelid is only an aesthetic problem. I do not feel that there is any relationship between the sagging eyelid and his changing color. Color changes can occur during new molts and can occur as the result of many factors that are not health problems.

Unless you feel that the sagging eyelid is creating problems, I would not be concerned.

Robert B. Altman, D.V.M.
Franklin Square, NY ●

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