**Bird Ailments & Their Treatments**

**By Dr Harry Cooper.**

**External Parasites.**
(a) Scaly Face or Beak Mite.
The development of a coral like appearance over affected areas is the result of a mite which feeds on debris that builds up around the beak. However, the parasite also affects other parts of the bird (below lower mandible, around eyes, external edge of ear, base of preen gland, anal area, base of major flight feathers and, of course, the legs.
Insufficient attention to these other areas is the major problem in control of the ailment. Treatment is by suffocating the mite with a smear of oily substance such as Vaseline.
Traditional use of strong antiseptics is not warranted and rapid restoration of normal tissue surface is expected.
Some birds do appear to be resistant to infestation while others appear to be susceptible - close observation of the latter is warranted.

(b) Red Mite.
These will not be found on the birds during daylight but may be seen when dark areas such as nest boxes are disturbed. They attack the bird during darkness and can be a real nuisance, even though little physical injury will be apparant. Treatment is by use of a safe insecticide (malathion, carbaryl, or pyrethin) with the latter (Mortein or Peabeau) preferred. Probably more effective through persistence is use of Vapona Strips (Shelltox or Marfu) provided the manufacturer's advice concerning coverage, ventilation and life are observed (Birds should not be allowed direct contact with these strips and use of perforated plastic jars to hold them is a common practice.

(c) Other Mites.
A number of other mites infest Budgerigars but are mostly non- pathogenic. Some do attack feathers and treatment, if warranted, is as for red mite or, in extreme cases, by direct application of the insecticide onto the bird.

**Internal Parasites.**

(a) Air Sac Mite.
This lives in the air sac and lung and even bone tissue. Its symptons are variable but usually include dry, harsh respiration and tail pumping. Proper diagnosis requires autopsy. Treatment is by getting the birds to inhale an aerosol insecticide or the fumes of Vapona Strips (see under red mite above). A broad spectrum antibiotic such as ampicillin (Penbritin) at 500 mg per 4.5 litres of water is used to deal with secondary infections caused by an infestation of mites.

(b) Worms.
A number of different worms inhabit Budgerigars and while tape worm segments may be seen when evacuated, the presence of others requires microscopic examination of faeces for confirmation. Treatment is by a number of drugs with Fenbendazole (Panacur being preferred. The 2.5% concentration product is used at the rate of lml per 3kg of body weight (Budgerigars average about 45g each) but care should be taken with application as it settles out of suspension in water. Nilverm is still in use but is extremely unpalatable, requiring denial of water for 24 hours. Its injectable form is used at the rate of 60ml per 4.5 litres of water, and the drench form at 105ml per 4.5 litres of water.

Worming three times a year should deal with problems, and once a year should suffice as a control measure.

**Diseases.**

(a) Enteritis.
This can be caused by parasites, Bacteria (Salmonella and E.Coli) or Chlamydia and while the cause cannot be diagnosed by simple observation, it is noted that bacterial infection causes a hyperactive bowel, with food being only partly digested and fermenting - faeces are foul smelling and tend to be greenish in the case of Salmonella and whitish with an E.Coli infection. In the case of Chlamydia, faeces are sticky green with mucus. All internal organs are swollen, producing a fever. Treatment is by administration of Tetracycline - available as Terramycin and Aureomyein at rates up to 4g per 4.5 litres of water for a serious infection, and 500-1000 mg per 4.5 litres for control. Neomyein or Kanomycin may be preferred if the exact cause is doubtful. Control measures, such as maintenance of a dry floor, protection of water vessels against contamination, elimination of rodents, and reduction of stress are essential.

(b) Coccidia.
In its chronic form produces a thick white pasty diarrhoea around the vent and in its acute form, perforation of the bowel wall, when internal bleeding can cause rapid death. Page 23 Treatment is by use of Amprolmix Plus at up to 20ml per 4.5 litres of water, and a dosage rate of 3-Sml per 4.5 litres can provide control. This drug is extremely safe.

(c) Chronic Respiratory disease.
This is similar to the effects of air sac mite, but tends to cause a wet discharge and a wet sounding respiration. It is not a major problem in Budgerigars. Treatment is by Galomycin.

(d) Nutritional Deficiency.
Lack of iodine causes enlargement, of the thyroid gland (goiter) and is difficult to distinguish from other respiratory diseases. Abnormal breathing with a sharp "eh eh eh" sound immediately after flight is a clue. Treatment is by addition of a little tincture of iodine to water once a week (just enough to colour the water pink) or by feeding green food that has been nourished with a complete fertiliser (includes trace elements). Calcium, Phosphorous, vitamin D and manganese are all important to skeletal development. Calcium and phosphorous are required in a 2:1 ratio with vitamin D to incorporate them into bone.
As seed has ample phosphorous but little calcium, the latter has to be provided and cuttlefish, lime blocks etc. should suffice. Vitamin D can be toxic if overdosed and if supplied, should concentrate on vitamin D3. However, an hour a day of sunlight will provide sufficient. Manganese is essential as a trace element cause curled toes and swollen hocks.

(e) Short Tail Disease.
As tail feathers emerge, they thicken and distort. The cause of this is unknown, it seems to affect hens more than cocks, and is spread by the tail biters. Affected birds do not recover.

(f) Trichomoniasis.
Produces a heavy exudate at the back of the crop and often causes bird to gulp and sometimes vomit. The crop becomes fluid filled. Treatment is by use of Emtryl at the rate indicated on the product (special measuring cup) but caution is required, as an overdose is toxic, and breeding birds are particularly susceptible to this, as they drink much more than normal.

Editor:
Please note that all recommended treatments are made for Australian conditions only, and it is advised that you consult your own local veterinarian for alternative treatments.