Use Of Antibiotics In The Treatment Of Budgerigar Diseases

Bacteria are a class of tiny organisms, larger than viruses (such as polyomavirus) but smaller than protozoans (such as coccidia). Antibiotics are a group of drugs that are primarily used to treat diseases caused by bacteria, although some antibiotics may also be effective against other types of microorganisms. For antibiotics to be effective they must be used appropriately, against organisms to which they are sensitive and at the correct dose. Because of this most antibiotics require a veterinary prescription and you should contact your veterinarian if you believe that your birds require treatment with antibiotics. Your vet will also be able to advise you about appropriate brand name products and manufacturers. Symptoms of diseases caused by bacteria can include diarrhoea, weight loss, vomiting, respiratory signs such as laboured breathing, coughing or sneezing, swollen joints, bumble foot, skin disease or abscesses. There may be other causes for these problems as well.

These antibiotics are commonly used treating budgerigars: The totracyclines Oxytetracycline (eg Terramyein, Oxymay B) and chlortetracycline (eg Tricon) are antibiotics in this group that have been available for many years. Doxycycline (eg Psittavet) is a later generation tetracycline that is better absorbed from the intestinal tract than the earlier types of tetracyclines and generally more effective. These drugs that are effective against Chlamydia psittaci the organism that causes psittacosis. Because they have been widely used in avicultural circles many bacteria have developed resistance against them.

The Sulphonamides.

These were some of the earliest antibiotics to be developed and there are a wide range of drugs in this group. Some, such as sulphadimazine (eg Sulpha D), are freely available without prescription. This group of drugs is useful in treating coccidiosis but many bacteria will be resistant. Later generation sulphonamides have been mixed with the drug trimethoprim to produce useful antibiotic combinations (eg Tribrissen) with much broader activity against a wide range of bacteria, particularly against Salmonella sp infections which are associated with diarrhoea and joint disease.

The penicillins and lincosomides. Most bacteria that cause disease in birds are resistant to penicillin. Procaine, the drug that is normally mixed with injectable penicillin, can cause deaths in small birds, so this drug should be avoided. Later generation penicillins such as amoxicillin mixed with clavulonic acid (eg Clavulox) and piperacillin (eg Pipril) are safe and effective against many common bacteria. Unfortunately piperacillin needs to be given by injection and neither piperacillin nor Clavulox remain stable in solution for very long so these drugs are not very useful for medicating whole aviaries.

Lincomycin is a useful antibiotic that can be obtained as a solution or powder mixed with the drug spectinomycin (eg Lincospectin). This drug combination has good activity against many of the bacteria that commonly cause disease in budgies as well as killing mycoplasmas, bacteria-like organisms that are sometimes associated with respiratory disease. It can be given by injection, orally or in the drinking water.

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