Why do I need a vet?

• A prompt diagnosis facilitates correct therapy, supports animal welfare and is cost effective

• Very few diseases of cage birds respond to antibiotics! ("The Yellow Powder")

• Zoonosis: people can catch Salmonella, Psittacosis, Yersinia and Tuberculosis.
Principles of Flock Medicine

Diagnosis

Clues from the history

- Husbandry
- Acute infection or poisoning
- Infestation or chronic infection
Investigation of a problem

- standard of husbandry
- recent import
- quarantine?
- any treatment given for Trichomonas?
- could it be infectious?
- ??cull for post mortem examination

Cedarmount Veterinary Clinic
Necropsy

- Health and Safety issues
- Lots of useful gross findings
- Very few specific diagnoses possible without expensive ancillary tests
Chlamydiosis

• highly infectious
• *Zoonotic*
• asymptomatic carriers
• intermittent shedding
• shed following stress (movement/illness)
• no treatment guaranteed to eliminate organism from flock

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Chlamydiosis (psittacosis)

- Conjunctivitis
- choanal inflammation
- diarrhoea/regurgitation
- any respiratory signs
- weight loss
- poor feathering

- Depression/anorexia
- “sick bird syndrome”
- neurological signs
- poor fertility
- increased neonatal mortality

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Specific therapy for Chlamydiosis

- Consider slaughter policy
- (chlortetracycline in food - not water)
- (doxycycline in food)
- enrofloxacin 200 mg/l in drinking water for 21 days
- retest “cures” periodically

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Psittacine Beak and Feather disease

• Circovirus - all birds
• African greys worst affected
• Causes French Moult in Budgies, Lovebirds and ringnecks
• Death with/without signs
Positive PBFD result?

- Significant if feather abnormalities present
- If feathers normal: retest in 90 days by venepuncture (carrier or recent exposure)
Polyomavirus (Budgerigar Fledgling disease)

- Chicks in the nest
- Swollen bellies, tremors, wobbly (abnormal feathers)
- Larger birds can vomit/diarrhoea
- Classically 7 weeks old, death in hours
- Adult septicaemia
# Respiratory Disease

- Birds have no diaphragm
- They have numerous air sacs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Upper Resp tract</strong></th>
<th><strong>Lower Resp tract</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mouth breathing</td>
<td>Change of voice, dyspnoea, tail bobbing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal plug, discharge, sneezing</td>
<td>Insp/exp difficulty, coughing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periorbital swelling, epiphora, head shaking</td>
<td>Exercise intolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyspnoea, exercise intolerance, yawning</td>
<td>Inappetance/vomition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neck stretching, inflamed cere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Therapy of Respiratory Disease

- **Depends on diagnosis**
- **Chlamydia**!
- Most URT has predisposing cause eg. Hypovitaminosis A treated by 30,000 IU/kg once weekly
- **flush sinuses daily**
- +/-parenteral antibiotics

- Most LRT disease is fungal (Aspergillus spp.), or occasionally Gram -ive bacteria
- **itraconazole orally**
Nursing the sick bird

- First Aid saves lives
- warmth (80°F/26.5°C)
- semi-darkness
- extra fluid if not eaten or drunk for 24 hours
- fluids by crop tube

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Fluid Replacement Therapy
Crop Tubing (metal/plastic with gag)

All vits/minerals, probiotics, antidiarrhoeals can be added this way

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Max Volume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budgie/Lovebird</td>
<td>1 ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cockatiel</td>
<td>2 ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Grey/Amazon</td>
<td>7 ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cockatoo</td>
<td>10 ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Macaw</td>
<td>15 ml</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Capillaria Infestation

These gut parasites will cause:

- Diarrhoea
- “Going light”
- Sporadic deaths
Intestinal Parasites

• Ascarids (fenbendazole 100 mg/kg by crop tube) *Not if in moult*

• Capillaria (ivermectin 200 mcg/kg I/M or topically - repeat after 3 weeks)

(Spiruroids and Cestodes - Rare)

Levacide too risky now there are safer alternatives

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Regurgitation

- Systemic disease or crop disorders
- Diagnosis by crop wash (Trichomonas, Candidiasis, bacterial)
- Treat as appropriate (Emtryl, nystatin, amoxycillin)
- Prevention of candidiasis by dimetridazole in drinking water (2g/l for 7 days before breeding season)
- “Sour Crop” (antacids, antibiotics, liquid feeds, motility enhancers)
Psittacine Proventricular Dilatation Syndrome (PPDS)

- "Macaw wasting disease"
- Regurgitation with massive dilatation of proventriculus
- fatal - believed to be viral
- diagnosis: stomach biopsy
Megabacteriosis

- Causes diarrhoea and vomiting in budgies (distended crop)
- Gram positive bacteria in faeces and proventriculus
- treat with amphotericin B (1 ml/kg twice daily by crop tube (Fungilin, Squibb)), or ketoconazole
Feather and Skin Problems

• Moults generally annually after breeding
• can be 2-3 times annually (esp. budgies)
• large psittacines can take 2 years to complete a moult
• Prolonged moult has numerous causes - essential AA def, hepatopathy, hypothyroidism, renal disease
• “pin feathers” reflect recovery
• parasites

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Feather picking

- full clinical examination
- skin parasites
- Biochemistry for hepatopathy
- Haematology
- Serology as appropriate
- Faecal parasites (Giardia in cockatiels)
- PCR PBFD/ Polyomavirus - can look like chewers
- PCR faeces Chlamydiosis
- Feather follicle cytology
Viral Skin Problems

- Avipox (eventually heal - keep clean)
- PBFD - fatal circovirus infection (except in Lovebirds) - *blood test new stock - isolate until result known*
- Polyomavirus - often fatal - *treat by culling, and interrupt breeding for 3 months*
- Papilloma virus (warts)
Strategies to control disease

- “All in all out” where practicable
- Quarantine (6 weeks minimum)
- Buy from known “clean sources”
- consider testing new stock

- Disinfect premises, especially in hatchery
- “Fogging” or clean out and disinfect
- Vetark range or F10
- Screening tests and appropriate strategies to control
Annual tests for disease

- Tests on pooled faeces (collected over 10-14 days)
  1: Chlamydiosis (PCR/antigen tests)
  2: Intestinal worm egg counts
- Optional tests for
  1: Polyomavirus (Budgerigar Fledgling Disease)
  2: PBFD (Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease)
Use of Supplements

- best via food (vitamins often degrade in water)
- Avimix 3 times weekly in young or non-breeding birds
- Nutrobal if breeding
- Probiotics at times of stress/medication
Sources of Information

“The Vet”

“The Net” (beware non-peer-reviewed stuff)

www.vetark.co.uk
www.budgerigars.co.uk
(Dr John Baker, Liverpool)

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