

Common "Myth" Conceptions about Psittacosis

MYTH

Psittacosis is a rare disease.

Birds never completely recover from Psittacosis.

A bird doesn't have Psittacosis if it looks and acts healthy.

If a bird is sick with Psittacosis, the mate and/or other flock members will also be sick

A bird can not have Psittacosis unless it has had recent exposure to other birds.

A bird infected with Psittacosis will not breed, lay eggs, or have live babies.

A bird does not have Psittacosis if it has tested negative.

A sick bird does not have Psittacosis if it continues to eat and it's droppings are normal.

Definite diagnosis of another infectious illness is sufficient evidence to rule out Psittacosis as the cause of the illness.

A sick bird did not have Psittacosis if he responded to another antibiotic besides CTC or Doxycycline (Psittavet).

REALITY

It is very common in some species.

Almost all birds recover completely with appropriate treatment and disinfection. Some physicians seem to share this "myth conception" however, since they may advise an owner to euthanase an infected bird.

The most common form of Psittacosis is probably the Symptomless carrier state.

The mate and other flock members often maintain a healthy appearance, although they are likely to be incubating or carrying the disease.

Recent exposure is not necessary since the incubation period can be prolonged, and birds can carry Psittacosis for years without symptom.

All three are possible, although some live babies from Psittacosis positive parents do not survive to adulthood.

The shortcomings of available Psittacosis tests have been discussed, and none are 100% accurate.

The presence or absence of digestive tract symptoms is insufficient to either diagnose or rule out Psittacosis in a sick bird.

Because of it's immunosuppressive nature, Psittacosis often coexists with other infectious diseases and should be suspected if other infections are relapsing or recurring despite treatment.

Most antibiotics, with the exception of Aminoglycosides, have some activity against Psittacosis, although they may not effect a permanent cure.

MYTH

A sick bird who recovered with CTC or Doxycycline treatment may have been suffering from a bacterial infection rather than Psittacosis.

Psittacosis doesn't need to be treated for a full 45 days if the bird gets completely better sooner.

REALITY

This is possible, but most serious bacterial diseases are not rapidly or fully responsive to therapy with bacteriostatic antibiotics, even if a culture indicates sensitivity. Mycoplasma is more likely if respiratory symptoms were present.

45 days of treatment are necessary to prevent and/or eliminate the chronic carrier state in most species.

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