



Eire Budgerigar Society

Viral Infections in Budgerigars

Unlike Bacterial infections, viral infections cannot be treated by antibiotics, so we must as breeders do everything in our power to protect our birds from these viruses which usually prove fatal not just to the infected bird, but possibly the whole flock. So cleanliness, hygiene and strict bio control are the way forward. Closing the stable door when the horse has bolted is a saying which applies to viruses in our Birds.....Keep them out!

1. Newcastle Disease:

Although associated with Fowl and Poultry, our Budgerigars can act as carriers as can all members of the psittacine group. This disease is a notifiable disease.

Signs:

Laboured Breathing
Greenish Diarrhoea
Fluffed up and in a lethargic state
Tremors.

Treatment:

You must always, keep Budgerigars away from any contact with Domestic Fowl
Vaccination is not practical. Prevention is the key.

2. French Molt:

This is a virus which is transmitted in the nest box, and may even be passed on by the hen in her crop milk. Chicks may get this virus by ingesting infected feather particles and droppings.

Signs:

This virus causes the loss of all of the Primary ,secondary and tail feathers, in chicks from about 4 weeks on. The virus causes the normal blood supply to the feather to stop, which results in the destruction of the feather shaft.

Treatment:

Again its a virus, so it must be prevented as there is no treatment available. A virucide such as F10 , Virkon S, or Breakout are highly effective at destroying the virus. All nest boxes should be immersed in any of these products before breeding commences, and nest box hygiene must be maintained through out the brood period. Regular changing of the concave and spraying of the nest box with one of the above named products, will prevent the virus establishing its self.

With experience you will recognise the early signs of FM. To save the bird, one must pull all the primaries, secondaries and tail feathers of the chick, this will allow the new feathers to grow properly.

Remember like humans, a virus which is a string of DNA establishes its self where the host is weak, so good nutrition and a stress free environment is the key to keeping your birds free from this disease.

3. Bird Flu:

The very name itself strikes fear into us as we have all become familiar with the bird flu strain of H5N1 which is transmittable to humans and has indeed caused fatalities. This virus is spread by migrating wild birds, swans, geese, etc.

So to recap: Viruses cannot be killed by Antibiotic treatment, so do not waste your time. Viruses may only be prevented by inoculation, and for our birds this is not practical, and with most if not all of these bird viruses, there is no ready cure. Once a virus like the ones we have described get into an establishment, it will quickly establish itself, with the normal outcome of the loss of the entire flock.

Prevention:

(a) Always use an alcohol gel on your hands before handling any of your birds

(b) Use a door mat which has been soaked in a solution of Vikkon S, Breakout or F10. This will prevent you carrying anything in on your feet.

(c) Make sure your visitors are aware of your bio security and that they comply fully

d. Operate a strict nest hygiene policy

(e) If there is any outbreak of any form of bird virus in any commercial establishment within a 100 Kms of your bird room, simply ban all visits.