

## ***Chlamydia psittaci***

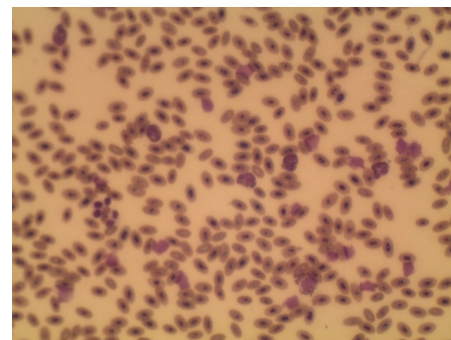
### **What is this disease and how does it affect my bird and me?**

#### **What is the disease called?**

Infection with *Chlamydia psittaci* has many names. Some of the more commonly used are psittacosis, chlamydiosis, bird fever, the 'one-eyed' cold, ornithosis and parrot fever.

#### **What causes this illness?**

The causative agent is a bacteria called *Chlamydia psittaci*, which can be carried by most types of birds, not only parrots, as well as many domesticated animals. It can be spread by inhalation, direct contact or ingestion. It is a different species of *Chlamydia* than is seen with in people with sexually transmitted *Chlamydia (Chlamydia trachomatis)*.



#### **What are the symptoms?**

Birds infected with *Chlamydia psittaci* generally demonstrate respiratory and gastrointestinal symptoms such as difficulty breathing, sneezing, sinusitis, diarrhea, discharge from the nose and eyes. The colour of your birds urates (the white part of the droppings) may also change to a green colour if your birds liver is affected.

This disease can be transmitted to humans. An infection generally causes severe flu-like symptoms such as a fever, chest pain, headaches and a dry cough. It can lead to pneumonia and meningitis if left untreated.

**We strongly advise contacting your general practitioner if you are concerned that you have contracted this infection.**

#### **My bird has not been in contact with other birds for ages!**

##### **How can he get it?**

There are different strains of *Chlamydia psittaci*, and many strains can lie dormant in infected birds for months to years, and are often activated by stress.

Stressors include changes to the environment (i.e. moving house, getting a new pet), a concurrent illness, aging, or weather changes.

#### **What are these tests you can use for diagnosing a chlamydia infection?**

We are one of a small number of veterinary practices in Australia to have an in-house test that detects antibodies against *Chlamydia psittaci* in your bird's blood. This test usually takes about 2-3 hours to run so in many cases we can let you





know your birds test results that day.

There is also a number of laboratory tests that use different mechanisms such as PCR (polymerase chain reaction) to test for the *Chlamydia psittaci* organism. These are valuable tests but do take longer to get results and are generally more expensive.

### How is it treated?

*Chlamydia psittaci* can be difficult to eradicate and the treatment course is quite long. We usually recommend a 7 week course of doxycycline, a type of antibiotic that is effective against *Chlamydia psittaci*. This course can either be given orally twice a day, or the patient can return to us every week for a long acting injection. The injection can be performed quickly and many owners feel that it stresses the bird less than giving an oral medication twice daily.



We do not recommend in-water medication unless there are many birds that need treatment, for example in an aviary situation. The reason for this is that it is difficult to know how much water your bird will drink each day so they can be easily under- or over-dosed.

For birds that have severely swollen areas around their eyes, we often recommend surgery to surgically clean out the sinuses where pus has built up. Avian pus is very thick and antibiotics are often not able to penetrate the pus very well, which is why surgery is often indicated.

### We've finished the 7 week course, is my bird cured?

Unfortunately, this is a difficult bacteria to completely clear from the system, especially since it has the ability to lie dormant for long periods of time. Repeat courses of doxycycline are sometimes needed.

We also strongly recommend ensuring that the bird has a good diet, is in a low stress environment, and that any other concurrent diseases be treated.



For any further questions feel free to get in touch with us.

