

# SICK BIRD SURVIVAL

When dealing with sick birds we all know that time is of the essence, however early signs of illness in birds are frequently not recognised by the bird owner.

## Did you know?

As a survival tactic in the wild, a sick bird will attempt to maintain a normal appearance for as long as possible, this means that by the time any signs of illness are apparent, the bird may have been ill for some time.

The bird that dies "suddenly" may be the result of the owner's failure to make distinctions in the appearance or behaviour of the bird prior to that time. To help identify a problem before it gets out of hand, there are some key warning signals that we can look out for in our birds.

## SIGNS OF ILLNESS

The following symptoms may indicate a serious health problem and veterinary assistance should be sought at once!

Change in attitude, personality or behavior - decreased activity, decreased talking and singing, increased sleeping, no response to stimuli.

Change in appearance or posture - ruffled feathers, weakness, inability to stand, staying on the bottom of the cage, sitting low on the perch, drooping wings, convulsions.

Discharge from the eyes, nose or mouth

Change in weight or general body condition as determined by a gram scale, or by handling; a prominent breast bone due to loss of breast muscle tissue is serious!

Decreased or excessive food or water consumption.

Vomiting or regurgitation.

Change in character of respiration - any noticeable breathing movement (e.g. tail bobbing) while resting, heavy breathing after exertion, change in quality of voice, respiratory sounds such as sneezing, wheezing or clicking.

Change in character of the droppings.

Injury, bleeding, enlargement or swelling of the body.

Sick Bird

If any of the above symptoms are detected in your birds the safest course of action is to get the bird to your preferred vet - ASAP. If this is not an immediate option, the next step is to hospitalise, monitor and administer first aid if necessary, until you are able to have them seen to.

A broad spectrum antibiotic can be used in some situations where vet help is not available, but this can be a very hit and miss (administering a tetracycline antibiotic to a bird with a tumour is useless!).

For more info contact the Vetafarm Team or you can watch our short and valuable walk through of basic first aid in birds, featuring Avian Vet Dr Tony Gestier. Just jump onto [www.youtube.com/Vetafarm](http://www.youtube.com/Vetafarm)

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Watch The Video



Treating Sick Birds



## EVALUATION OF DROPPINGS

Normal pet bird droppings consist of 3 parts:

1. FAECES are food waste material from the digestive tract. Normal faeces can vary somewhat in colour and consistency, depending on the diet. Diets with a high seed content usually produce homogeneous black or dark green faeces. Birds on formulated diets (pellets) normally exhibit softer, brownish faeces.

2. URINE, the liquid portion, is normally clear. A diet high in vegetable and fruit matter may increase the urine component.

3. URATES, or creamy white waste from the kidney, are often suspended in the liquid urine or appear to wrap around the faeces.

Observation of droppings is a simple method of monitoring your bird's health. Paper towels, newspaper or other smooth surfaces can be used to line the cage bottom so that the number, volume, colour and consistence of the droppings can be noted daily.

A sick bird may exhibit:

- Decrease in the total number or volume of droppings
- Change in the colour of the URATES or URINE
- An increase in the water content of the FAECES (diarrhoea)
- Decrease in the FAECES volume with increased URATES
- Increase in the URINE portion (polyuria)

