

# Avicultural Society – South East Branch

## Discussion on Bird Health

### Pro-biotic

**Plain yoghurt** (warm) is a good source of introducing gut flora (good bacteria or intestinal microbial balance) for newly hatched birds, birds that may be ill and/or not eating well.

The yogurt will 'reboot' or 'balance' their 'good' stomach flora.

You can buy pro-biotic in powder form that is water soluble, one being "**Probac Soluble**" from The Australian Pigeon Company, and it is recommended that it should be given to the bird for 2 days after any antibiotic treatment. A pro-biotic can be used during periods of stress or generally as a 'pick me up'.

DO NOT over use antibiotics as they can (in some cases) do more harm than good.

I treated a number of budgerigars over a long period of time with antibiotics plus 'sterilised' the aviary to the point that the birds became 'ill' and lost condition. A sample of faeces was kept prior to this process taking place. These faeces were crop fed as a 'slurry' to one of the birds and within days it was bordering on full health – it basically helped to get the gut flora back to normal.

Some people like to have spotless aviaries / breeding cages. It is better to leave the birds faeces in the aviary/breeding cage (within reason and as long as not in the weather enabling it to get wet) as the faeces is a source of **B12** after a period of time.

### Iodine

Iodine in the water creates a number of positives:

- it kills any bad bugs (organisms) that may be in the water,
- helps warm the blood – great for winter,
- (potentially) a more prolific breeding season as it helps the thyroid gland to remain 'healthy'. The thyroid gland regulates many metabolic processes, including growth and energy use.

Treatment is 8 drops (1 drop = 0.05 ml.) of Iodine Tincture per litre of water 3-4 times a week (continual days). Disinfecting or purification time is around 15 to 30 minutes depending on water temperature.

### Vitamins, Calcium & Grits

Natural sunlight produces **Vitamin D** and is required to assist the absorption of **calcium** along with other benefits.

A Vetafarm product 'Soluvite D Breeder' is a water soluble formula with a variable of **vitamins** that are suitable for all species of birds. Liquid **calcium** can be added to this mix in the form of "CalcivitePlus" or 'Calcivet' or similar products. This 'blend' can be used to help prevent splayed legs, soft shelled eggs.

Mount Gambier water is full of lime and should be a suitable source of **calcium** to the birds. Some time ago, during the breeding season, I decided to change my water source from Mount Gambier water to rain water, within a week numbers of eggs were being produced with soft shells.

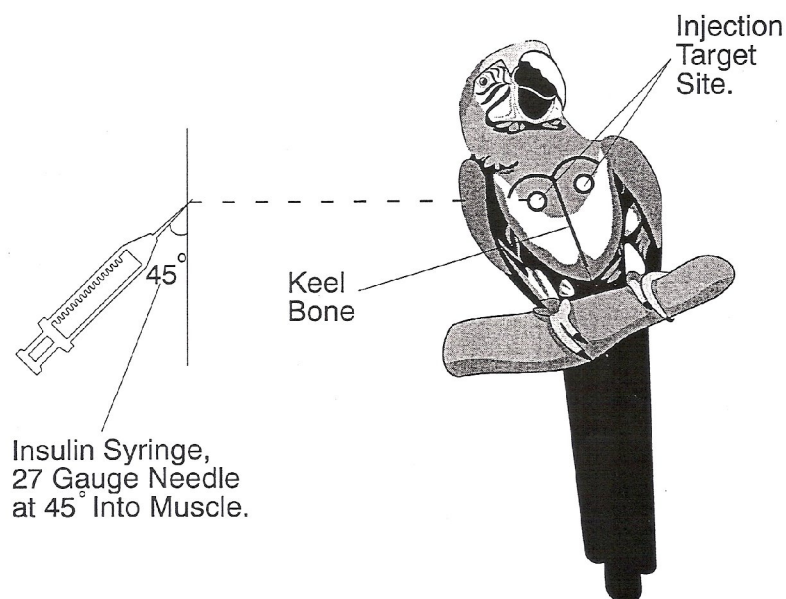
What had I done?

A complete removal of the very thing they needed for egg production had been removed. A quick reversion to Mount Gambier water had things back on track in a short period of time.

If you are feeding more than 20% oil seed, then "CalcivitePlus" or similar might be needed, as this high intake of oil seed may interfere with the **calcium** intake of the bird.

**Calcium Gluconate** made up to 1.375 mg per ml of 'water for injection' is a good source of **calcium**. Inject around ½ ml to the chest muscle (budgerigar size).

#### BIRD INJECTION SITE



**Grit** is great to give to the birds it helps them to grind up their seed, like teeth, the **grit** stays in the gizzard until it breaks down. **Beach sand** and **shell grit** are often used but they 'dissolve' a lot quicker due to the acids within the crop. Beach sand is of benefit as it contains **salts** and a variable of **minerals**.

**Soft dolomite** and/or **limestone** are also good for the birds as a source of **calcium** and will assist in beak 'maintenance'.

**Cuttlefish** is high in **calcium** but it is more of a toy, the birds just break it up and leave it on the floor - they may get a small amount of **calcium** from it.

**Be very careful** where you get your Cuttlefish from as it is a great sponge and can absorb toxins that may harm or potentially kill your birds. I also suggest that if the Cuttlefish is powdery to touch, it should be thrown out. There is no substance in the Cuttlefish for one, and I fear some bacterial or other action has caused this breakdown and if the bird does have some intake I would not be certain of the end result for the bird.

**Charcoal** is a good toxin absorber and I feed this to the birds readily.

**Silverbeet** is a source of **iron** and **Vitamin A** and will help with cell production, the growth and repair of tissues and excellent for skin, bone, egg and feather health. **Not enough Vitamin A** can result in poor feather production.

<b>High Vitamin A</b>	<b>Low Vitamin A</b>
Apricot	Apple
Broccoli leaves and flowerettes	Banana
Cantaloupe	Corn
Carrots	Grapes
Collard greens	Lettuce
Mango	Orange
Nectarines	Summer Squash
Papaya	White potato
Parsley	
Peaches	
Sweet potato	
Spinach	
Turnip greens	
Yellow squash	

### **Sprouted Seeds**

Sprouted seeds are more valuable for the birds. They are rich in digestible energy, bioavailable vitamins, minerals, amino acids and proteins noting that these are necessary for a germinating plant to grow.

Chavan and Kadam (1989) concluded that - "The desirable nutritional changes that occur during sprouting are mainly due to the breakdown of complex compounds into

a more simple form, transformation into essential constituents and breakdown of nutritionally undesirable constituents.”

### **Gum Branches**

Fresh gum branches, including leaves are a good source of ‘sugar’ – and I should mention in particular for psittacines. I prefer to use sugar gum, but now find it hard to access.

The cambium (a layer of cells) produces sap conducting tissues:

- Xylem - carries water and dissolves minerals from the roots through the stem and leaves.
- Phloem - carries the nutrients to all parts of the plant.

This is a ‘natural’ for the birds but is best presented freshly cut to enable the birds to access the positives from within.

### **Medications that I keep on hand**

“**Doxyvet**” or any Doxycycline water soluble product that is manufactured for birds is the first treatment that I give any new birds once they arrive at my establishment, for 7 days in the warmer climate and 10 days in the ‘moist’ climate noting that some birds will take the ‘moisture from the air’ in lieu of drinking. Some birds can go for many days without a drink. This product is also used for the treatment of Chlamydia or Psittacosis, a vet will diagnose this and then a 45 day treatment is required. Humans can get quite ill from Psittacosis and if you are having continual flu like symptoms, it is wise to inform your Doctor that you keep birds so a simple blood test can be taken to assess if it is present within your system

“**Ronivet-S**” to treat Canker (Trichomoniasis). I thought this issue was more of a Queensland problem because of the humidity. Wrong, I had an outbreak last year that impacted my aviary, the birds were from Queensland, had been quarantined and were paired up and had chicks. The issue was with the chicks. Luckily a local vet was vigilant and identified the problem and the loss was one bird. One bird too many. Now I treat every 3 months as recommended by the vet and on the label.

“**Emtryl**” is another product that treats Trichomoniasis but I would suggest use with caution. It has been suggested that this product renders the cocks infertile for a number of weeks as well as being dangerous to use in hot weather as too large a consumption may kill the birds. Use in winter or if it must be used during summer make sure it is a very weak dose – noting again that 4 treatments a year would be recommended.

I am talking budgerigars here and am not sure about other species.

“**Baycox**” is used to treat Coccidiosis. Treat for 2 days and every 4 weeks if an ongoing issue. Aviaries that have dirt floors are more at risk of picking up this infection as it has the perfect environment to live in. The Oocysts can lay ‘dormant’ for years and with the right conditions, another outbreak.



Coccidia oocysts

One thing to remember with all of medicinal treatments is to NOT feed soft or green foods. The treatment should be the only source of ‘liquid’ available.

“**F10sc**” is a veterinary disinfectant that kills off certain Gram+ and Gram- bacteria, yeast, fungi, mould, viruses including Newcastle Disease and avian influenza I have read. A very important addition to any establishment.

“**Moxidectin**” wormer is a product manufactured for birds as is Combantrin for humans. Fanciers use sheep and cattle products with great risk. Get the dose wrong and the end result can be disastrous. Would you take a sheep or cattle product yourself in lieu of for example Combantrin? I suggest not.

“**Linco-Spectin**” Antibiotic Injectable Solution has probably saved more birds for me than any other product. The correct dose injected into the keel muscle is the best way to administer.

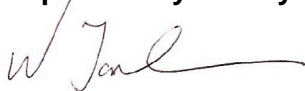
“**Tricin – eye ointment**” also used for ear problems in animals.

“**Tricin – Triple Antibiotic Powder**” treats wounds that have infection from Gram+ or Gram- bacteria.

“**Avian Insect Liquidator**” or ‘**AIL**’ a residual insecticide that is able to be sprayed onto the birds and lasts around 6 weeks. I use in the nest boxes, on the perches and have great success with this product.

**Before treating** any of my birds with a water soluble medication, be it preventative or a treatment, I remove the water container the afternoon prior to the treatment and give the ‘water’ as late as possible in the morning (late morning to early afternoon) so they ‘hit’ the container readily. I DO NOT USE bottles to drip feed water. This is in my opinion a disaster waiting to happen. Open bowls only gives access to the birds to share the drinker plus minimises the risk of transfer of disease from one bird to another.

**CAUTION** – these are products that I use on my birds as required and take no responsibility for any other person using these products for whatever reason.



Nigel Tonkin

1<sup>st</sup> Aug 2010