

RVC Exotics Service

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PSITTACOSIS

Psittacosis is a zoonotic disease, which means that it can be transmitted from birds to people. It is caused by the bacterium *Chlamydia psittaci*. It is best known for affecting parrots and parrot-like birds (causing avian chlamydiosis) but can affect other avian species as well as being passed to mammals and humans. It can be shed in body secretions for example, faecal, nasal and ocular fluids. Infectious organisms can survive in the environment for several weeks and may be distributed by dust. The infection is mainly airborne.

Once the infection is passed to humans it cannot usually be passed from human to human, nor from humans back to birds. It is a chronic disease posing a particular risk to children, the elderly, and immunosuppressed individuals. If you have any concerns about your health in relation to your bird, please discuss this with your healthcare provider.

CLINICAL SIGNS

- In humans the common signs are headaches, neck pain and fever (similar to flu) progressing to respiratory
 infections and potentially pneumonia. It can also cause fatal heart disease (rare). More information on the
 disease in humans can be found on the NHS website here: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/psittacosis.
- Signs you may see in your bird include swollen eyes/eyelids, nasal discharge, sneezing, depression, ruffled feathers, weight loss, inappetence, bright green diarrhoea, feather colouration changes and occasionally nervous signs, or even sudden death.

DIAGNOSIS

Psittacosis can be a difficult disease to definitively diagnose but