

## PSITTACOSIS Q&A

### *(Chlamydia psittaci infection, Ornithosis, Parrot fever, Avian chlamydiosis)*

#### ***What is psittacosis?***

Psittacosis is an infectious disease usually transmitted to humans from birds in the parrot family, turkeys and pigeons.

#### ***Who gets psittacosis?***

Since birds in the parrot family spread this disease, it is occasionally found among pet store workers and people who have recently purchased an infected bird. It may also be found among farmers and slaughterhouse workers who process turkeys.

#### ***How is psittacosis spread?***

Psittacosis is usually spread by inhaling dust from dried droppings from birdcages and by handling infected birds in slaughterhouses. Human to human spread has not been reported.

#### ***What are the symptoms of psittacosis?***

The symptoms are fever, headache, chills and sometimes pneumonia.

#### ***How soon after infection do symptoms appear?***

The incubation period may range from 1 to 4 weeks.

#### ***What is the treatment for psittacosis?***

Antibiotics such as tetracycline are often prescribed. If left untreated, the disease may be severe and result in a high death rate, especially in older people.

#### ***How can psittacosis be prevented?***

If birds are kept as pets, clean the cage often so that fecal material does not accumulate, dry up and become airborne. Current laws require that members of the parrot family that are imported from foreign countries be kept in a bird quarantine station prior to sale. During the quarantine, they are given feed containing tetracycline to reduce the risk of infection, but the duration of treatment is generally shorter than the 45 days necessary to completely treat the bird. Therefore, federal health authorities have recently recommended that breeders and importers ensure that all domestic nestling and imported birds receive

special tetracycline feed for 45 continuous days in order to prevent the spread of psittacosis from birds to humans.

#### ***Where can I get additional information on psittacosis?***

Contact the Georgia Division of Public Health, Epidemiology Branch, by email at [gaepinfo@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:gaepinfo@dhr.state.ga.us). The following web site may be useful:

- CDC Psittacosis Sheet – [http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/psittacosis\\_t.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/psittacosis_t.htm)