

BIRD FIRST AID

by Teresa Linton

Please use these tips when you need immediate help, but have no quick access to a good bird vet. This information should in NO WAY be used as a substitute for visiting an avian vet.

SIGNS OF ILLNESS

- inactivity
- eyes closed most of the time
- feathers fluffed all of the time
- "droopy" wings
- low, almost horizontal, posture on perch
- talking and vocalization stops
- eating stops
- noisy breathing
- frequent sneezing
- discharge from nose
- tail bobbing with each breath
- perching with neck extended and beak grasping wire of cage, (bird does this to keep breathing passages straight to make breathing more effortless)
- vomiting
- soiled or pasted vent
- feathers lost and not replaced
- bleeding
- weight loss
- swelling
- changes in water consumption
- changes in routine and habits
- change in droppings
- change in activity level
- decrease in preening activity
- frequent flicking of the head
- remaining at bottom of cage
- self mutilation
- regression
- dehydration (weakness, sunken eyes, feet cool, ridging of skin over sides of toes)

TREATMENTS

AIR SAC RUPTURE

Disinfect skin. Poke with sterile needle to allow air to escape. Repeat as necessary. Air sacs are located inside the neck, chest and belly. When ruptured, air will leak from the sac and accumulate under the bird's skin. If air is not released, the tear in the sac will enlarge. If there is no improvement within 48 hours, see vet for surgical repair or antibiotic therapy.

ANOREXIA

Feed with a syringe only if you know what you are doing.

BLEEDING

Cleanse the area gently with a 3% hydrogen peroxide solution, *Nolvasan*, or *Betadine*. Apply styptic powder, cornstarch, baking soda, flour, boric acid, or a red hot needle to stop the bleeding. If necessary, cover the wound with gauze pads and hold firm pressure on the wound for two minutes. Leave the gauze on. If cut is on leg or feet, apply antibiotic ointment, then bandage loosely. If cuts are on the body, cover with gauze and appropriate size sock, (cut hole in toe of sock for head and holes for legs). NOTE: this doesn't work well with smaller birds. Do not bandage over styptic powder.

BROKEN BLOOD FEATHERS

Grasp the bleeding feather shaft firmly with hemostat or needle-nose pliers at base of feather close to the skin, holding wing firmly and pull shaft out smartly. If follicle bleeds apply pressure for 1 minute with thumb and index finger.

BROKEN BONES

Look for shock symptoms (see **Shock**). Wings - cut toe out of appropriate size sock allowing bird room to expand chest while breathing. Place over bird with head through cut hole and cut opening for feet. BROKEN TOES - wrap gauze into ball. Put foot around ball. Wrap foot to gauze ball with gauze.

BURNS

Spray or flush with cool water. Glaze burns twice daily with small amounts of antibiotic ointment. BY ACID: put on a thin coat of baking soda paste. BY BASE (like bleach): treat with vinegar. BY GREASE: sprinkle with flour or cornstarch before rinsing with water. Be careful not to get any in eyes or nose.

CAT BITES

Wash out with hydrogen peroxide. Apply antibiotic ointment. Take to vet for shot of injectable ampicillin. (Cats transmit a bacterium called *pasteurella* with

their bites or scratches. In birds, this causes *Pasteurella septicemia*, which means death within 24 hours if not treated).

CONVULSIONS

Place in a quiet, padded box. Can be caused by poisoning, nutritional deficiency, epilepsy, or infectious disease (bacterial, fungal, viral, or parasitic).

CROP BURNS

If you realize in time, flush the crop with cold water. If crop appears swollen and discoloured (many days after) apply vitamin A and D ointment and feed small meals.

CROP EMPTYING PROBLEMS

A few drops of *Maalox* or *Digel*, or a few drops of mineral oil (orally) and massage crop.

DIARRHOEA

Remove fresh fruits. Feed cooked white rice, peanut butter, baby pabulum, canned baby foods, Chamomile tea, or a few drops of *Pepto Bismol*.

EGG BINDING

Put bird in steamy room (like bathroom with shower on). 85-90 degrees Fahrenheit, humidity 60%. Put bird on wet towelling. Give high calorie, high calcium food.

EYE PROBLEMS

Keep bird away from intense light. Flush eye with clean water, use cotton ball or syringe. OBJECT IN EYE--float it out with KY Jelly or Ophthalmic ointment.

FOOD FOR SICK BIRDS

Mix one pint of water, one pint of Gatorade, 1 teaspoon of honey or Karo syrup, 1 level teaspoon of baking soda, 1 level teaspoon table salt.

Caution: Measure with care; inaccurate measurements can cause severe diarrhoea.

HEATSTROKE

Spray feathers with cold water. Put feet in cold water. Place in cold room. Watch bird for shock. Wrap loosely in towel to prevent chill.

HYDRATION FOR BABY BIRDS

Lactated Ringers solution - for compacted or sluggish crop. You can use the solution instead of water to mix the formula. Contains electrolytes.

Pedialyte - (can be found in baby food section of grocery) electrolyte replacement therapy in case baby isn't doing well.

HYDRATION FOR SICK BIRDS

Orange or cherry juice.

OIL CONTAMINATION OF FEATHERS

Dust bird with cornstarch or flour (keep away from eyes and nose). Suggestion--fill pillowcase with flour, cut hole for head, stick it through, gently shake it. Then fill sink with 3 or 4 inches of warm water and mild detergent (like *Dawn*). Work soap in directions of feather growth and rinse (sink spray attachment helpful). Dry and keep warm. Wait until next day to repeat (if necessary).

POISON

If by acid, alkalis, or petroleum product: make it swallow milk, mixed with Pepto Bismol, eggwhite, or olive oil. **DO NOT MAKE BIRD VOMIT!**

If by other: induce vomiting. Use mustard and water solution put at the back of the throat.

If known: call poison control centre.

If burned: see **burns**.

Note: mushrooms, crayons, some fruit pits, nicotine, chocolate, mirror backing, foil, etc... are bird poisons.

SHOCK

Symptoms: fluffed feathers, not moving, rapid shallow breathing, head may be turned with eyes partly closed.

Place bird in warm (86-90 degrees F), secluded, dimly lit environment. If accompanied by life threatening injuries, treat immediately.

VOMITING

A few drops of *Pepto Bismol*.

<http://www.birdvet.com.au>