

## VITAMIN A DEFICIENCY

Hypovitaminosis A, or Vitamin A deficiency, is common in birds who are on a poor diet. Birds fed only seeds are especially vulnerable. Vitamin A deficiency causes the bird's body to become more susceptible to infections. Symptoms depend on which area of the body is affected, but the respiratory system is often where this deficiency shows up. The mouth is one of the first places where signs would be evident.

### Signs & Symptoms of Vitamin A Deficiency

- Small white plaques on the roof of the mouth and/or at the base of the tongue.
- Large abscesses will become evident as the plaques become infected.
- Laboured breathing will begin as the abscesses close off the airway.
- Eventually you will see nasal discharge and obvious swelling around the eyes.
- The bird may also display sneezing, wheezing, nasal discharge, crusted or plugged nostrils, lethargy, tail-bobbing, diarrhoea, loss of weight, swollen eyes & eye discharge, lack of appetite, gagging, foul-smelling breath and "slimy mouth".

### Treatment

Birds don't usually die of Vitamin A deficiency, but of the secondary infections. If a bird is deficient, your vet will give it injections to increase its levels of Vitamin A. The vet will also have to treat its secondary infections, which will be tested for. Your bird may be hospitalised and nebulised (given medication through inhalation).

### Prevention

To help a bird ward off a Vitamin A deficiency, offer it foods high in Vitamin A, such as carrots, watermelon, papaya, sweet potatoes, chilli peppers, broccoli leaves and flowers, turnip leaves, endive, beets, and dandelion greens. Also ask your vet if you should be adding a daily supplement to the bird's diet.

## CHECK YOUR BIRDS DROPPINGS

- Watch for changes in their droppings (stool) - discolouration, watery, change in regularity, lack of faeces. Droppings are a combination of urine and faeces. The faeces is dark, the urine white.
- A change in a bird's droppings is probably the most significant indicator of illness. Examine them daily - both for changes in frequency, and their appearance.
- Changes can be caused by the simple introduction of new foods, over-eating of fruits, poor water or stress. Always see your vet if the droppings don't return to normal.
- Like us, sick birds usually won't want to eat. And, reduction in food will result in loose, watery droppings with a lack of faeces. As long as the bird's intake of water remains the same the frequency of the droppings will remain about the same, but when water intake is also decreased the frequency of droppings will also decrease.

Droppings that are consistently runny, including runny faeces, may indicate diarrhoea. Diarrhoea is a symptom that something is not well in the bird's lower digestive tract. Causes can be diet (new foods, poor foods); intestinal infections; stress; poisons.

Check for evidence of parasites. Roundworms - long, thin white worms; Threadworms - round and thread like; Tapeworms - flattened and segmented worms.

Blood in the faeces can indicate bleeding in the large intestine, infection, poisoning or excessive stress.

Excessive urine can mean disorders of the kidney, liver or pancreas, and blood in the urine may be caused by poisoning or stress.