Psittacine Incubation and Pediatrics

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KEYWORDS

• Psittacine • Pediatrics • Sexing • Neonatal care
• Diagnostics • Diseases • Psittacine husbandry

As avian veterinarians, we can help by educating our pet bird owners and avicultural clients. We can support our avicultural clients' efforts. We can make an "Aviculturist" binder displaying aviculturists' cards and listing the bird species they breed and sell. We can support and facilitate direct breeder sales. Direct sales result in healthier pet birds as it is safer, for babies especially, to go directly from breeders to their new home.[1]

Education can save many parrots and is very important in today's avicultural climate. The small aviculturist dominates the industry and needs our help. Aviculturists are a group of hard-working individuals who could benefit greatly from well-planned veterinary consults. Some aviculturists keep abreast of husbandry developments but resist preventative medical checkups and nutritional advances, and may even opt to treat many of their sick and injured birds at home. Preventative avicultural medicine can be a tough sell, as it may appear to be a costly process to examine an entire collection, but in the long run, it is more cost effective than triage medicine. The survival rate is much lower with triage or emergency medicine than in a collection with routine preventative medicine. Although small aviculturists can be seasoned and knowledgeable, as mentioned, they are more commonly isolated, uninformed, and eager to learn. Avian veterinarians can make a difference by focusing on avicultural education and pediatrics. This is important because aviculture is the only future for many parrot species. Further, aviculturists' predominantly have their birds' best interests at heart and most are very receptive to new ideas. This is especially true if we, as avian veterinarians, take the time, on a regular basis, to educate them, answer their questions, and address their concerns.

Like psittacine pediatric medicine and surgery, a significant part of avicultural medicine is HUSBANDRY, and the most important husbandry issue is nutrition.[1] Nutrition is important at all levels of psittacine development. Hence, the avian

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The author has nothing to disclose.

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Vet Clin Exot Anim 15 (2012) 163–182
http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cvex.2012.04.002 **vetexotic.theclinics.com**
1094-9194/12/$ – see front matter

veterinarian must become knowledgeable of neonatal and juvenile handfeeding formulas and techniques, weaning feeds, adult and breeder bird pellets, as well as specific nutritional requirements of parrots of all ages.

Avian veterinarians must be readily available, in the author's opinion, on a 24-hour-a-day basis. They must also take the time to educate their avicultural and baby bird clients, both individually and in groups. Education can take place within the clinic, on site at breeding facilities, or at bird clubs and national meetings. The important thing is to educate, consult, listen, and help these people and consequently help their birds.

The first requirement for successful captive breeding is a true pair.[2] Gender determination is paramount for successful psittacine aviculture. Sexing is necessary because psittacines are predominantly monomorphic. This has resulted in many same-sex pairs, thought to be true pairs, inadvertently set up for years.[2] This is especially true when a female pair is producing eggs. Accurate sex determination is also important because sexing is a veterinary service and the avian veterinarian is making a diagnosis. Various options for sexing are available; hence the avian veterinarian can choose the method most suitable to the patient and the client. Additionally, sexing of baby birds can help breeders who wish to sell their birds as a particular gender at an early age.

SEXING

Visual Sexing

A few psittacine species are sexually dimorphic and can be definitively sexed by visual examination. Some examples follow:

- Eclectus parrot: Males are green and females are vibrant red and purple.
- White-fronted Amazon parrot: Males have red versus green feathers on the upper wing coverts, the edge of the carpus, and the alula.
- Pileated parrot: Males have red feathers on head, and females has green.
- Red-tailed black cockatoos: Females have spots on head, body, and wing feathers, and the tail is barred with yellow-orange feathers. Males lack spots and the tail has red bars.
- White-tailed black cockatoos: Females have white ear coverts and light horn-colored beak. Males have gray ear coverts and dark gray beaks.
- Gang-gang cockatoos: Males have red head and crest feathers, and females are totally gray, barred with grayish white.
- Pesquet's parrot: Males have red feathers behind the eye, which are absent in females.
- Australian king parrot: The males have scarlet red feathers on the head, neck, and under parts. Females have green feathers on the head and chest and red feathers on the lower abdomen. The beak is red-orange and black tipped in the male and black in the female.

Vent Sexing

Vent sexing is an accurate sexing method for one psittacine species, the Vasa parrot, where a penis-like appendage is found in male birds.

Surgical Sexing

First performed in the 1970s, surgical sexing is by far the best and most direct method of gender determination in monomorphic psittacine birds of almost any age. The main disadvantage of surgical sexing is the inherent, though minimal, surgical and