Further information on avian fungal disease

Dear Colleagues

Council received information from Dr Dorianne Elliott from the Bird and Exotic Animal Hospital, Onderstepoort. Please refer to the details below.

Dr Clive Marwick, President SAVC

Further information regarding avian fungal disease

Regarding the suspected outbreak of Trichosporon cases in birds - please be aware that several other diseases can cause clinical signs indistinguishable from those listed in the initial email.

A diagnosis of Trichosporon cannot be confirmed without either positive culture or PCR. We at the Bird and Exotic Animal Hospital have not yet confirmed a case and are in the process of further testing. We have, however, seen a large number of fungal respiratory cases this season, likely due to the strange weather we have been seeing.

Aspergillus specifically is often caused by the ingestion of fungal contaminated seeds and peanuts. Parrots on a seed and peanut diet also have multiple nutritional deficiencies, predisposing to immunosuppression.
We recommend immediate conversion of all parrots on a seed based diet to one consisting of a high quality extruded pellet, balanced cooking mix and fruit and veg. A little high quality seed is acceptable but peanuts should be avoided.

Typical signs of Aspergillosis may include:
- Dyspnoea, open mouthed breathing, voice loss
- Exercise intolerance
- A marked Monocytosis with a very high WCC
- Radiographically - masses in the lungs or airsacs, increased airsac opacity

The literature indicates that Voriconazole is the most effective antibiotic for cases of Aspergillosis. Covering antibiotics, anti-inflammatories and nebulisation should also be part of the treatment protocol.

Weight loss and occasionally neurological signs with a proventriculomegaly on radiograph may also be indicative of Avian Bornavirus, known as Avian Bornaviral Ganglioneuritis. This is also an emerging avian disease and may be infectious to other birds. Treatment with Cox2 specific non-steroidals may halt the progression of the disease.

We are happy to offer advice on suitable diagnostics for any suspected cases.

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