

Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease (PBFD)

Information for the Pet Bird Owner

Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease (PBFD) is a progressive, fatal disease caused by a circodnavirus. The affected birds are usually Old World varieties, especially cockatoos.

The symptoms of PBFD fall into two types; an acute form and a chronic form. The acute form usually affects juveniles aged from 14 to 16 weeks. They become listless and stop eating. Low white blood cell counts are typical. The immune system stops functioning normally and secondary infections can occur.

The chronic form is manifested by an unthrifty feather coat. Down and contour feathers are first affected. Good feathers are molted and replaced with diseased feathers. Secondary bacterial, fungal and viral infections are common. Beak malformations may occur along with oral ulcers.

Diagnosis is made by showing typical changes in the affected feather shafts. The sample is sent to a specialized veterinary laboratory facility.

PBFD is contagious from bird to bird and isolation of affected bird is necessary.

No known treatment for this disease exists at this time. Symptomatic treatments of secondary infections and force feedings may be necessary.

PBFD is progressive, fatal disease. Some birds with aggressive supportive care can live for years with minimal symptoms. The recommendation for euthanasia is made when the bird is either in pain or no longer can eat on its own.

IMPORTANT POINTS

- Abnormal molts may indicate early PBFD and an appointment is recommended for examination of your pet.
- Although there is no known cure at this time, symptomatic treatment may improve the quality of life for your bird for a variable amount of time. Treating secondary infections and maintaining the nutritional status of your bird is necessary.
- The disease is contagious to other birds and quarantine is essential.



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