Psittacosis
Avian Chlamydiosis

What is psittacosis and what causes it?
Psittacosis (sit-ah-CO-sis) is a respiratory disease caused by the bacteria Chlamyphila psittaci (cla-mid-EE-Oh-file-ah SIT-a-sigh). In birds, the disease is also called ornithosis (or-ni-THO-sis), or avian chlamydiosis (cla-mid-EE-Oh-sis), or parrot fever.

What animals get psittacosis?
Psittacosis affects a variety of bird species. It occurs most often in parrots, parakeets, pigeons, doves and mynah birds. The disease is sometimes seen in ducks and turkeys, but is rare in chickens.

How can my animal get psittacosis?
Infected birds shed the bacteria in their droppings and nasal discharges. Other birds can be infected by inhaling (aerosol) dried droppings or secretions from infected birds. Direct contact with sick birds can also spread the disease to humans. Psittacosis is a health hazard for people who work in close contact with birds, such as bird or pigeon fanciers, bird dealers and breeders, poultry workers, pet shop employees, and veterinary clinic employees. Psittacosis can also be spread person to person.

Can I get psittacosis?
Yes. People can get psittacosis by inhaling (aerosol) dried droppings or secretions from infected birds. Direct contact with sick birds can also spread the disease to humans. Psittacosis is a health hazard for people who work in close contact with birds, such as bird or pigeon fanciers, bird dealers and breeders, poultry workers, pet shop employees, and veterinary clinic employees. Psittacosis can also be spread person to person.

How does psittacosis affect my animal?
Some birds infected with the bacteria show no signs of disease and are called carriers. These carrier birds can shed the bacteria when they are stressed from illness, nutritional deficiencies, breeding, or overcrowding and infect other birds or people.

Birds that are sick may have loss of appetite, weight loss, ruffled feathers, yellow or greenish diarrhea, difficulty breathing, nasal discharge, weakness or trembling and swelling of the tissues surrounding the eyes. Poultry will also have decreased egg production. Trembling or difficulty walking may be seen in ducks.

Who should I contact, if I suspect psittacosis?
In Animals – Contact your veterinarian.
In Humans – Contact your physician immediately.

How can I protect my animal from psittacosis?
There is no vaccine available for birds against psittacosis. The best prevention is keeping your birds in a clean environment with good air flow, providing healthy nutrition and avoiding stress or overcrowding. Make sure any new birds introduced into a home are free of avian diseases. You may want to quarantine new birds for a period of time before introducing them into your flock.

How can I protect myself from psittacosis?
Avoid close contact with sick birds. Wear gloves, masks, eye protection and gowns to protect yourself when working with sick birds or when cleaning bird housing areas or cages.

For More Information
CFSPH Technical Fact Sheets. Psittacosis at http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/DiseaseInfo/

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Psittacosis
is a bacterial disease that can be spread by contact with birds or bird droppings.

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