

Chlamydia



What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a bacterial agent most commonly affecting birds, but is occasionally found in cats as well.

Who in the family is at risk for chlamydia?

Chlamydia, also called psitticosis, is a zoonotic disease capable of infecting people. Infected people may also be a source of infection for birds. Since birds often carry the bacteria without being affected by it, bird owners are at increased risk.

How is chlamydia transmitted?

Chlamydia is spread from birds and cats to people by inhaling or ingesting the bacteria from eye or respiratory discharge, stool or urine. Higher risk contact can occur while cleaning cages or visiting areas with a high volume of birds (chicken coops, etc.) but exposure can occur anywhere birds are present. Do not touch your face with your hands directly after handling your bird and do not allow your bird to touch your face as this can increase the chances of disease transmission.

How do I know if my pet or I is infected with chlamydia?

In cats, the infection can cause a mild inflammation of the tissues around the eye (conjunctivitis). Birds may be asymptomatic (without noticeable symptoms) or demonstrate eye or nasal discharge, trouble breathing, fluffed up or miserable appearance, bright green stool or green discoloration of the urates (the white material often mistaken for feces). People infected with chlamydia may experience flu like symptoms including fever, headache and muscle aches. They may also develop atypical pneumonia,

which can progress to serious neurologic disease or heart disease. Seek medical attention from your Banfield doctor if you have any concerns about your pet's health and visit your family practitioner for any health questions about your human family.

How is chlamydia treated?

Treatment can be very difficult in birds. Diagnosed cats and birds will be treated with antibiotics such as tetracycline and symptomatically.

What can you do to protect the entire family from chlamydia?

All new birds entering an aviary, including multi bird households, should be screened for chlamydia. Pets with known infections should be isolated from other pets and family members and treated by a Banfield veterinarian. In people, practice good hygiene for both your family and pet. Encourage family members to wash exposed areas of skin after petting and playing with pets. Food/water dishes, cages and birds should be kept out of food preparation areas.

Besides chlamydia there are many other zoonotic diseases that pet parents may be exposed to such as fungal diseases, respiratory diseases and gastrointestinal diseases. Due to this it is imperative that good hygiene and the above safety precautions are implemented by all family members.

For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.

