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ACCES for Pet Health

The Animal Critical Care and Emergency Services blog provides important information to help readers stay current on the health topics most affecting their pets. Our veterinarians provide knowledge to help you give your pet a long and healthy life.

Bird Emergencies: From Cockatiels to Cuckoos to Chickens

Did you know that birds are the third most popular companion pet in the United States, behind dogs and cats? The American Veterinary Society estimates there are over 10 million birds in this country, with the highest concentration of our feathered friends in the Pacific Coast Region. Some birds are extremely social and bond with their owners; they mimic words and even and actions. Others are just beautiful to look at. Some birds are extremely intelligent and have remarkable memories and problem solving abilities. In fact, some crows have learned how to use tools: "Using their beaks as scissors and snippers, they fashion hooks from twigs and make barbed, serrated rakes or combs from stiff leathery leaves. And they don't throw the tools away after one use—they carry them from one foraging place to another."

<http://www.pbs.org/lifeofbirds/brain/index.html>

Yes, birds are remarkable and that is why their popularity as companion animals has grown. Pet birds have brought new and interesting challenges to veterinary medicine; they carry some illness that are similar to their 4 legged counterparts, and some illnesses that they're uniquely sensitive to. Did you know the fumes from a heated Teflon pan can cause breathing problems and death to our feathered friends?

ACCES medical director, Dr. Davidow, is an Emergency and Critical Care specialist who has an interest in birds and who has owned birds. She says, "Emergencies in birds are difficult because these animals often hide illness until they are quite sick. Often, the first significant sign is that they are on the bottom of the cage, fluffed, or unwilling to perch. Because birds hide their illnesses, any bird that doesn't eat for more than 12 hours, is very fluffed in the cage or who is sitting and not moving on the bottom of the cage should be seen right away."



Some of the most common emergencies include:

1. Breathing problems from: viruses, bacteria, toxins in the air and seeds caught in the airway.
2. Some birds even develop heart disease.
3. Bleeding from injured toenails, beaks and broken feathers.
4. Difficulty laying eggs or egg binding; this condition can be life threatening because it prevents stool passage and impairs blood flow.
5. SEIZURES, yes birds can have seizures. There are many causes of seizures

including; toxins, trauma, cancer and more. Seizures can be life threatening in any animal but birds are especially sensitive as their muscle spasms they use up their glucoses (sugar) stores and oxygen very rapidly.

Emergency support for your bird will include oxygen, controlled heat support, fluids and often sugar replacement. In addition, support may include pain medication, antibiotics or other medications.

If your bird needs to see a veterinarian on emergency basis Dr. Davidow has some suggestions:

Call the emergency hospital to let them know you are coming and so they can be prepared.

Transport them in their own cage and cover the cage if it cold outside. This helps to decrease the birds stress and allows the veterinarian to determine a lot about the bird's condition by examining the food and droppings that are in the cage.

For more information visit the ACCES website and read Dr. Davidow's article on Avian Emergencies:

<http://www.criticalcarevets.com/Avian%20Emergencies.pdf>

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