

Cutaneous Cryptococcus in an African Grey Parrot

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Although cutaneous cryptococcus has been previously reported in dogs and cats, reports of its occurrence in birds are rare. Internal (respiratory) infections have been reported, but the only cutaneous form previously reported was in an Eclectus Parrot seen by Jim Gill. Since then, there have been several cases seen in Victoria (Doug Black, Patricia McWhirter, pers comm).

This case report details the clinical signs, diagnosis, treatment and eventual outcome of a case of cutaneous cryptococcus in an African Parrot.

An eight year old African Grey Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus erithacus*) was presented for two pigeon egg-sized fleshy lumps, one on each side of the beak, in the vicinity of the nares. The masses also appeared to have spread into the palatine area. They had been there for some time, but the bird was now moderately depressed, and having difficulty eating. A tentative diagnosis of lymphoma/lymphosarcoma was made, and a biopsy submitted to VPS.

The lab report came back as cryptococcus. The treatment decided on was to surgically debride the masses, and then follow up with a systemic anti-fungal drug. During the debridement it was noted that the infra-orbital sinuses were now slightly distended. The initial treatment was Nizoral (Ketoconazole, 1 x 200 mg tablet crushed into 1200 mL water) on an eight days on, eight days off regime. After a month there had been no change, and so the treatment was changed to Fluconazole Syrup (5 mg/mL - Pfizer). This was given at a dose of 8 mg/kg/day.

There were no problems with palatability, and after two weeks there was a noticeable improvement. The bird was eating well, and the lesions were shrinking. The beak was deformed, probably due to damage to the top of the beak. Treatment was continued for two months.

Two years later the owner reported that the bird had sired two young the previous season. A year after that he reported that the lesions were returning. A second biopsy showed cryptococcus again, but the owner decided not to treat. As far as I am aware the bird is still alive and well, but I feel that its days are numbered!

This case illustrates several points:

- the need for good diagnostic procedures. Without a biopsy, this case would have been diagnosed as a tumour and euthanased.
- cutaneous cryptococcus does occur in birds.
- treatment may have to be given for long periods, and a recurrence may be expected.

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