**Emergency Care/ First Aid for Birds**

Birds are prey species, which means they will attempt to hide all signs of disease until they can no longer do so.  Therefore, any signs of illness should be investigated carefully. The following are common emergency presentations we see in pet birds:

1. **TRAUMA** often involves bleeding, fractures or concussion.  The top priority is to stop bleeding.  The most effective method to stop bleeding is direct pressure.  Once the bleeding has stopped or slowed dramatically, styptic powder, super glue or flour may be used to help form a clot.
2. **BURNS** must always be inspected by a veterinarian, even if the skin looks good.  Many require shock therapy, pain control and antibiotics.  In many cases, the full extent of burn damage is not known for several days.
3. **GASTROINTESTINAL DISEASE** includes anorexia, diarrhea, passing whole seed, decreased emptying of the crop and regurgitation.  Note that birds in new or stressful situations may not eat for a time.  Introducing new foods may cause a change in feces, and food with high water content may cause increased wet dropping from urine production.  Conditions requiring veterinary care include diarrhea, passing whole seed in stool, decreased fecal output, or yellow to green urates (white portion of droppings).
4. **TISSUE PROLAPSE** from vent may be the uterus, rectum, and egg or other tissue.  Call a veterinarian immediately.  If care is delayed, you may lightly rinse the tissue with warm, sterile saline solution or contact lens solution, and moisten with sterile lubricant like KY jelly.
5. **CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM DISEASE** includes seizures, paralysis and/or incoordination.  Weakness and/or seizure may be due to hypoglycemia.  If the bird is alert you may give a small amount of karo or pancake syrup in water and call the veterinarian.
6. **HYPERTHERMIA** or overheating from exposure to extreme heat can quickly be life threatening.  Signs of hyperthermia include panting and holding wings away from the body.  Be aware panting can also be caused by respiratory disease, and not overheating.  Birds that are hyperthermic can be cooled by gentle application of cool water.
7. **RESPIRATORY DISEASE** symptoms include difficulty breathing, sneezing, nasal discharge or a voice change.  If the bird has severe difficulty breathing, place the bird in a dark box or carrier, minimize handling and stress and call the veterinarian immediately.
8. **SWELLINGS** may be abdominal fluid, an egg, a hernia, air from an over inflated air sac or a tumor.  If the bird exhibits difficulty breathing, or otherwise seems depressed call the veterinarian immediately.
9. **ANIMAL BITES** always require antibiotics, even if you are not sure if the skin was broken.  Wash wounds and flush with water if veterinary care is delayed.
10. **BEAK INJURIES** may or may not be emergencies depending on the extent of injury of location.  Large fractures, or injuries near when the beak is connected to the face should be seen as soon as possible.  Bleeding should be controlled with direct pressure.

If you believe your pet may require an emergency after-hours visit, please call the clinic to obtain contact information for the veterinarian currently on call.

**Emergency First Aid while waiting for help**:

**Warmth:** with the exception of birds that have been accidentally overheated, most birds benefit from warmth.  Warm your bird with a space heater in a small room, with a desk lamp, or in a box or aquarium on a heating pad set to low. Be sure the temperature remains between 80-90 degrees, and watch carefully for overheating. Birds that are too hot will move away from the heat and may pant.

**Food:** Birds that have not been eating well (judged from the presence of small than normal, dark stools) can be given karo or pancake syrup in water by eyedropper or syringe, in small amounts every few minutes.

Many sick birds that are warmed and given syrup brighten up and begin eating on their own. Keep the bird warm, protect from falls, make sure food and water are right in front and easily accessible, and call the clinic for information on how to reach the doctor on call.

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**A note on the ADR bird (Ain’t Doing Right):**

Typical calls to our clinic involve birds that are “maybe a little lethargic, sometimes diarrhea, not eating as well as normal, just a little puffed up and sleeping more”.  Practically every disease a bird can have, mild or severe can present with these exact symptoms.  As birds are masters at hiding signs of illness, we recommend an exam for any “ADR” bird, along with testing and laboratory work to help us distinguish between the many possible diagnoses.