

# Avian Toxicities

*A PowerPage Presented By*



Birds are susceptible to many of the same toxins that can affect other animals but they are at increased risk of several specific intoxications, especially heavy metals and inhaled toxins due to their highly efficient respiratory exchange mechanisms. This PowerPage describes some of the most important bird toxins to be aware of.

## Teflon Vapors

- Non-stick cookware releases an odorless vapor when heated above a critical temperature (530°F)
  - This accumulates in the avian lung and results in fluid accumulation, impairing gas exchange
- Sudden death may be seen within minutes
- Oven liners and hair curling irons can also be sources of Teflon vapors

## Avocado Toxicity

- The toxic principle is unknown
- Budgerigars are most susceptible
- Causes acute renal failure in birds

## Zinc, Lead and Other Heavy Metal Toxicities

### Lead

- Sources of lead include
  - Paint, solder, toys with lead weights, jewelry, glitter, lead shot, ornaments, foil
- Signs of lead poisoning include:
  - Acute weakness, anorexia, or regurgitation

### Zinc

- There are many common sources of zinc including
  - Paint primers on cages, nails, key chains, galvanized metals, sequins, jewelry, metal zippers, pennies (minted 1983 and after)
- Clinical signs include:
  - Depression
  - Lameness
  - Regurgitation
  - Behavioral changes

### Sources of Other Heavy Metals

- Tin- from aluminum foil or cans
- Copper- from old pennies, electrical wires
- Iron- from rusted steel products

### Diagnosis

- Because signs tend to be variable and non-specific, radiographs to look for metals is indicated
- Blood testing for heavy metals can confirm diagnosis but usually do not test for iron

### Caffeine

- Common sources include chocolate, soda, coffee, tea
- Causes vomiting, hyperactivity, tremors, seizures

### Household Chemicals

- Particularly sensitive to aerosol vapors
  - Phenol derivatives (ie. Lysol, Pine-Sol)
- Bleach
- Ammonia
- Perfumes
- Rubbing alcohol
- Paints (particularly oil-based paints)
- Fragrances from candles, hand lotions, air fresheners

### Alcohol Toxicity

- The avian liver is particularly sensitive to alcohol
- Birds often like the taste of beer but even the levels of alcohol found in beer can be very toxic

