

# Disinfectants and Avian Illness Protocols

Questions and answers... Disinfectants

We get many—many emails weekly---daily we can receive as many as 40-50 emails about something concerning birds, be it, breeding, diets, cleaning around birds and many other subjects, Over our 35 years as professional aviculturist and as one of the largest breeding and research centers on several species, especially yellow naped amazons and other amazons, These years of disciplines have given us a hard earned knowledge and database on several subjects. One of these subjects is disease control, safety and cleaning with disinfectants. and not least expertise.

Now the question from an email, To Royal Bird Company...I have a question, the question is about cleaning around birds and keeping diseases under control, I did see you had wrote and published an article on your website about this very virus, PACHECOS virus...and i have read it and i would like more info. We have had some problems with this virus recently. I do tell you this we are not newbies and I am the president of my bird club, I have taken classes on vet tech, I am the local go to person for info on bird breeding, and like you guys there are Royal Bird Co, we are experts in breeding and keeping our birds healthy.

We purchased a couple birds from a local bird mart or some would call it a bird show in Georgia and bought some at a exotic animal sale in Texas, The birds bought at the bird mart in Georgia were 3 pair of nanday conures, a pair of mitred conures, 2 pair patagonian conures in Texas and we purchased a baby yellow naped also at the sale in Texas, The sale was located in south Texas. There were maybe a dozen baby yellow napes for sale there. We purchased the birds in Texas in December 2016; we purchased the others in Georgia in March of 2017 being just a couple of months after the sale in Texas. WELL, the first problem soon started within a few weeks after the sale in Texas, the yellow naped got a runny nose and started throwing up and stopped eating, and few other birds got sick as well and our vet checked it and started treating for Chlamydia with doxycycline and told us to use it for 45 days while we was fighting that, we noticed within a week of purchase of the birds in march, we saw a few birds die overnight with no symptoms, these were birds we have had for years, the birds we purchased the nandays and conures never got sick or showed any problems, we noticed the birds we had right next to the nandays a pair of African greys one died, the next couple days another bird from a pair of cockatoos died right down the line of cages from the conures. In total we lost 14 birds and none of the conures died. Our vet tested and told us we had one of the most deadly virus one can have in parrots, Pachecos. We were told to separate and clean up, we used a disinfectant called Nolvasan to wash cages, and used dishwashing liquids to clean our dishes daily.

We kept this up for almost 6 months, but little by little almost all our birds we had before the purchases died, having left only the conures and the yellow naped baby was saved and was always in the home. But, my whole family has had the flu ever since. My doctor told me that my family has been exposed to Chlamydia and the flu symptoms come from that, my whole family has now been taking doxycycline as well, we are exhausted and scared, why has this happened? What more could we have done? Should be concerned about the babies and birds we sold to customers during this illness? Any info can help, thank you..from M. Sneckett, Houston, Texas.

Our answer:

Hello, well it seems that you indeed have a mess and a dangerous one at that, A danger to your birds that you already had and a real danger to your family and to be blunt, you will not like what I am going to say.. It was all your fault, and I mean that in almost respectful way, You said you had birds for years and said you knew about the care of birds and you thought of your self as a professional and expert,

I must ask you, you said you was an expert,,,an expert in what?

I am shocked by your comparison to what we do here, and a little insulted.

And you actually continued to sell baby birds and other birds from your premises.

You all the while knowing that a sickness was breaking out.

So, for your expert remark I say, BULL,,,,,

How is it, that if this expertise you have is true, why and how could you continue to sell? you had no knowledge of quarantine, no sense of what you were buying and no sense that you should never ever purchase at these places, no sense of testing before exposing to your other birds and possibly other peoples birds and absolutely no sense of disinfectants and no sense on how or what they do and no knowledge of how to clean. NO basic knowledge what soever.

Maybe the lack of common sense things it's not all your fault, as many times its not. Many rely on their old time veterinarians for advice and help. A real responsible aviculturist (expert) should research, learn and put into place several protocols that can help you save your flock. Some vets just do not have this basic knowledge pertaining to avian species, they mostly studied and learned about dogs and cats, cattle, horses and farm animals and other mammals, The same cleaners, disinfectants and protocols one puts into place for those would not be the same as parrots and birds. Many veterinarians call them selves avian vets, but it only takes a few extra courses during their vet school but that does not make them experts either, as many times they do not actually see enough real live clients to get the experience.

Your vet seemed spot on when it came to testing after the sickness started both times, you did not mention if he or she instructed you on HOW to separate, HOW to clean, HOW to disinfect. Cleaning and disinfecting is 2 entirely different things, I will not pretend to have a chemistry background when it comes to chemicals but our experience and animal science studies and our own research programs have helped with some basic knowledge on keeping things clean and what to use for disinfectants around birds. First thing is this, you most likely brought pachecos in with the conures, well known fact, those species, nandays, Patagonians conures are well known carriers, pachecos will be present in their system but only spreads to other birds once stress reactivate the shedding of the virus, moving birds is stressful. I would bet that the birds were what I call hot birds when you purchased them, meaning they was shedding the virus in their droppings when you put them into your cages and then it was just a matter of time.

This virus . avian pachecos which is a herpes virus that attacks the liver and fast, is very lethal and fast, the only way to deal with it, prevention, as no cure is available, its fast, and it is a killer, many times, it kills one bird in a pair and leaves the other. But it will and can wipe out the entire aviary.

But you did everything wrong, from the start, you should have never ever purchased at open air markets, sales, bird marts, shows. Its just not where you would find quality safe birds and ANY expert would know that. Its actually the place most breeders go to get rid of birds that they do not want for one reason or another. I mean come on think about it, common sense says,,even if the birds were not already a carrier, how many people and how many other birds did they come in contact with at those sales and bird marts?. Was other sick birds at the show or bird mart? Who knows...but in any event, after you brought them home, you put them right beside the birds you already had, The birds should have been quarantined, BUT, even that would have never showed up anything if they was just carriers and its very hard to test birds that are only carriers and not actually sick, so that would have not helped you. And the worse of all, you continued to sell your illness to unsuspecting customers, SHAME on you..

But the simplest thing is this, I tell you the facts,,without me sounding pretentious and arrogant, well maybe it does sound that way, but I care not, I say WHY would you purchase such cheap birds when you were owners and breeders of greys, cockatoos, macaws, etc. Not to say that those conures are not great little birds, but if I was a breeder of conures and was willing to take such a chance, then I would only have that. Some breeders are very successful in keeping many different species on the premises including the conures, but they keep them separated and use very strict time consuming protocols when feeding and maintaining, would I do it? No, I have enough to worry about and I would never allow those on or around my property, period.

I have found that these cheaper species tend to be kept and bred by people that seem to not have a lot of financial resources. Therefore these birds will not be in the best or kept in the best of situations for good long term health. Its just a matter of common sense thinking, it's a hard way to look at it, but its fact. If it's cheap to purchase and replace, most times they will not be taken care of correctly, sorry, but true. Its not the birds fault, it's the bad bird keeper. Now for the disinfecting or cleaning that you did the first thing. It was mostly just worthless and was a factor in spreading the problem. For cleaning bowls, you used dish washing detergent, not that bad if you had been then dipping them in an effective disinfectant, but, you used Nolvasan, and this is a chlorahexidine disinfectant compound that comes by many brands. In our experience, it's worthless and many bird owners and breeders for some reason are overly confident in the product, this product has very little uses around the birds and aviaries, it just does not kill all things, especially pachecos and other viruses. I think this product got its start in the breeders aviaries as it was readily available in the past and thought to be non toxic to a degree, and its main use was in the cattle and chicken industry.

But one that uses it around parrots and gets overly secure in thinking it's such a great product, these people will in time sooner or later suffer from problems as you have done. We actually used the product over 28 years ago, as it was the disinfectant of choice of vets and birders in the USA. We kept our hand feeding equipment soaking in a solution of the nolvasan when not in use, we seem to have, as many other breeders did have a series of Candida problems, this is a very common and easily treatable yeast infection of the baby birds crops, the antifungal nyastatin is very effective and easy to use. However veterinarians just shrugged it off as "Oh Its Normal" to have Candida in hand feeding babies from time to time as its not normally life threatening, it was just common to hear about it all the time. It was just accepted. Well, we were not and still not the type to actually accept something that seems to be so wrong.

We had the solution tested, just after one 24 hour use of the solution of nolvasan; the solution was teaming with Candida albicans, YEAST. The solution seemed to grow it. When the organic material was introduced into the solution off the equipment it actually started the growth. And just by rinsing it off and using the equipment was the cause of the problems we were seeing in our nursery. The very day we stopped using it, we was treating 4 baby macaws for Candida. From that day forward, we rarely ever even to this very day, we just seem to not have that problem any longer. Problem solved. But we hear horror stories all the time from other breeders about their battles with yeast, and yes, almost 100% of the time, they are using Nolvasan or a form of that. But yeast is not the only thing its useless for. Nolvasan is not effective against many of the avian viruses such as pachecos.

Many viruses that one sees in around the aviary and or nursery needs something else entirely, these killer viruses need a type of compound that oxidizes, as these viruses are encapsulated and pure alcohol has no effect. Chlorine bleach is the most effective against every type bacteria, fungi, virus that one may encounter around their birds.

This common, household product has done more to save millions of human lives than any other product today. It's highly effective against most of the earth's pathogens that cause illness and harm to most animals, humans and or birds. Just a little common sense while using this product and it can be a total disinfectant that kills, oxidizes and deactivates almost all known pathogens; even Ebola is deactivated by a little Clorox. If you had been using a simple Clorox water mixture I would think that the Pacheco's would have been better controlled along with some strict protocols your outcome would have been better, but instead you spread the killer virus. Due to the disinfectant used was Nolvasan, this was useless against Pacheco's and by using this product you spread the virus via hands, clothes, etc.

Always remember that cleaning and disinfecting are not the same, and using Clorox or any type disinfectant, remember the surfaces must be cleaned before hand, meaning this, clean the surface, bowls or cages and then disinfect with a good product. Without the surface being cleaned first the disinfectant cannot reach the surface through organic debris or soiled surfaces. We totally wash and clean all our bowls daily with a product called OXYFRESH cleansing gele. This great product was made known to us by the famous researcher, Dr Branson Ritchie Dvm; this guy has done more research on the avian viruses than anyone else.

The Cleaning gele is a for human use cleaner and chlorine dioxide solution, Chlorine dioxide is a stabilized form of chlorine and is said to be much safer to use around birds, It has no smells and does not activate into a gas therefore safe for use in and around avian species. Many city municipal water treatment plants now use the stabilized chlorine dioxide due to its safety and effectiveness. We love it and use it daily, when doing a massive cleaning we use it in our high pressure machines when cleaning cages, we soap and clean and pressure wash and then we do not really try to totally rinse off, we allow a small amount to remain and dry to give us a residual disinfectant action. Totally harmless to the birds in the cages. When we are hand feeding and working around the babies in the nursery we wash all syringes and pipettes in the gele. We no longer have the so-called normal problems in the nursery as we experienced many years ago.

Now, you mentioned something about a baby yellow naped amazon you purchased at a sale in south Texas, well, all bets that bird as the others was a smuggled baby from Mexico. You experienced the problems that one would find in such a bird, Chlamydia also known in parrots as Psittacosis or parrot fever. And the high numbers available at that sale, is a red flag. Ask this question, Why would any breeder, lets say any quality breeder, ever sale their high quality baby at an auction sale, think about that. Would you sell your babies there? And here again, the sense of knowing what to buy, where to buy and where not to buy comes into play, You practiced no common sense of any experienced and knowing breeder or bird keeper.

Buying such birds at such places is just not very smart and one with the experience you said you have, you should have known better, but now your bird and your family is or was sick. Let us not forget about the birds that you sold to customers during this ordeal. Are they a problem waiting to happen or an illness just waiting to break.

This could have been worse, by keeping the bird inside the home away from the other birds you saved this bird from the Pacheco virus but you in turn caused another illness in the family. There is not much I can say here but, the sickness you experienced in your aviary and home is preventable in so many ways. First try to learn about hygiene, disinfectants, and put into action several quarantine protocols, use a good disinfectant such as Clorox solution, We use around a 1/4 cup or less of Clorox in a gallon of water for water food dish dips. We use the cleansing gel by Oxyfresh all the time, everywhere, on everything; I highly recommend this product for anyone that does not understand how to use Clorox safely.

Try not to purchase birds from places that have no control of the environment. These places such as bird marts and bird or animal sales allow everyone or anyone come into contact with the birds and this is very dangerous and is a problem waiting to happen. It takes many years of research, learning and evolution of a bird keeper to actually know what they are doing and in turn this is what makes a responsible breeder and bird keeper. The responsible breeder in turn is able to offer to the public high quality babies for sale. There is more to being an expert than just saying one is an expert. I do feel for your loss of those birds as some we would hope could have survived with little protocols in place for such events. None of us in this industry ever wants to see that, but if it strikes we must be able to put into actions that can save lives and prevent others from illness. I do want to state to all that may be thinking that birds can carry illnesses and one may be afraid to try to keep birds, Keep in mind that dogs and cats and most mammals including humans have and carry much more illnesses. These events that happened here are not common and most all can be prevented and at the least controlled to some degree. Just be cautious where you buy birds. and I wish you luck. Thank you

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