

## PSITTACOSIS FACT SHEET

(*Chlamydia psittaci* infection, Ornithosis, Parrot fever, Avian chlamydiosis)

**Agent:** *Chlamydia psittaci*.

**Brief Description:** An acute, generalized infectious disease with variable clinical presentation: fever, headache, myalgia, chills and upper or lower respiratory tract disease. Respiratory symptoms are usually mild when compared with the extensive pneumonia demonstrable by x-ray.

**Reservoir:** Principally in parakeets, parrots, and love birds; less often in pigeons, turkeys, domestic fowl and other birds. Birds that appear healthy can be carriers, particularly when subjected to the stresses of crowding and shipping.

**Mode of Transmission:** Inhaling the agent from desiccated (dried) droppings, secretions and dust from feathers of infected birds. Imported psittacine birds are the most frequent source of exposure, followed by turkey, squab and duck farms.

**Incubation Period:** 1 to 4 weeks.

### Laboratory Criteria for Diagnosis:

- Isolation of *Chlamydia psittaci* from respiratory secretions, or
- Fourfold or greater increase in antibody against *C. psittaci* by complement fixation or microimmunofluorescence (MIF) to a reciprocal titer of greater than or equal to 32 between paired acute- and convalescent-phase serum specimens, or
- Presence of immunoglobulin M antibody against *C. psittaci* by MIF to a reciprocal titer of greater than or equal to 16

### Diagnostic Testing:

#### A. Serology

1. Specimen Needed: 5-10 cc. whole blood. Acute and convalescent sera
2. Outfit: Other serology outfit, order #0504.
3. Lab Form: 3595
4. Lab Test Performed: Indirect immunofluorescent antibody test.

5. Lab Performing Test: State Immunology Lab, Georgia Public Health Laboratory (GPHL) in Decatur.

#### B. Culture or identification

1. Specimen Needed: Throat swab
2. Lab Form: CDC form 50.34.
3. Lab Test Performed: Isolation of agent or microscopic identification of agent.
4. Lab Performing Test: CDC, through prior arrangement with the State Public Health Laboratory. *Do not submit specimens directly to CDC. All specimens must be submitted to the State Public Health Laboratory.*

### Case Classification:

- **Probable:** a clinically compatible case that is epidemiologically linked to a confirmed case or that has supportive serology (e.g., *C. psittaci* titer of greater than or equal to 32 in one or more serum specimens obtained after onset of symptoms)
- **Confirmed:** a clinically compatible case that is laboratory confirmed

**Period of Communicability:** Diseased as well as apparently healthy birds may shed the agent intermittently, and sometimes continuously, for weeks or months.

**Treatment:** Tetracycline is the antibiotic of choice. Erythromycin can be used as an alternative when tetracycline is contraindicated (pregnancy, children <9 years).

**Investigation:** Determination of possible exposure of the patient to a potentially infected bird or infected bird droppings is essential. The implicated bird(s) should be identified so that appropriate public health measures can be promptly instituted.

**Reporting:** Report all cases **WITHIN 7 DAYS** electronically through the State Electronic Notifiable Disease Surveillance System (SENDSS) at <http://sendss.state.ga.us>, or complete and mail a GA Notifiable Disease Report Form (#3095).

**Reported Cases of Psittacosis in Georgia, 1993-2000**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Number of Cases</b> |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 1993        | 0                      |
| 1994        | 0                      |
| 1995        | 5                      |
| 1996        | 0                      |
| 1997        | 0                      |
| 1998        | 0                      |
| 1999        | 0                      |
| 2000        | 0                      |

**References:**

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Case Definitions for Infectious Conditions under Public Health Surveillance. *MMWR* Vol 46(RR10), 1997: 1-55.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Compendium of Measures To Control Chlamydia psittaci Infection Among Humans (Psittacosis) and Pet Birds (Avian Chlamydiosis), 2000. *MMWR* Vol 49(RR08), 2000: 1-17.
3. Chin J, ed. Psittacosis. In: Control of Communicable Diseases Manual. 17<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, DC: American Public Health Association, 2000: 405-407.

**Links:**

- CDC Psittacosis Sheet – [http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/psittacosis\\_t.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/psittacosis_t.htm)

