



AAV 2014 New Orleans

Roundtable Discussion on Tuesday,
August 5 from 2:00 – 5:00 PM
for the topic of



Preventative Care as the Foundation of Avian Medicine.

From the standpoint of (avian) veterinarians, a healthy population is a population without (contagious and non infectious) diseases ..

Over the years the problems have become more and more complicated. One of the reasons is that there is a lack of understanding within the avicultural society and within avian medicine that there is a great need to develop protocols to prevent contagious diseases and to prevent non-infectious diseases.

Many problems occur because of mismanagement within aviculture. The combination of degeneration because of inbreeding, breeding mutations, mismanagement and lack of natural selection forces makes birds in aviculture more vulnerable to (contagious) diseases.

We can also expect more non-infectious and hereditary problems in the (near) future.

(Hooimeijer J, Medical Problems Because of Management Failures in Aviculture:

Proceedings Annu Conf Assoc Avian Veterinarians, New Orleans, 1999)

- 1 Colleagues and pioneers of avian medicine including Dr. Greg Harrison and Dr. Ted Lafeber have recognised malnutrition as major cause of disease and death and have been working on the prevention of the most common problems avian veterinarians are faced with.
- 2 In 2014 malnutrition is still the number one cause of disease , premature death, and reproduction problems in the Netherlands and I assume worldwide.
- 3 At many veterinary colleges around the world Avian medicine is not currently part of the curriculum.
- 4 It is disturbing to see that the number of veterinarians that exclusively focus on the health and welfare of birds is getting less and less.
- 5 A review of papers and presentations, looking at the titles and the keywords , at international conferences and the development of Avian Medicine as a speciality shows there is little attention given to preventative medicine.
- 6 Prevention is not a priority in current or historical avian research.

- 7 Prevention is currently not a prevalent topic in presentations and not an obvious topic discussing case studies at AAV conferences.
- 8 Prevention is currently not a prevalent topic or within the Journal of Avian Medicine and Surgery or within very well known books concerning avian medicine.
Some examples:
- + In : "Diseases of Cage and Aviary Birds by Margaret L. Petrak" there is no chapter about prevention and the word prevention is not mentioned in the index.
 - + In : "Clinical Avian Medicine and Surgery" by Harrison and Harrison there is a chapter written by Keven Flammer mainly about Aviculture Management. In the index there a reference to this chapter
 - + In: "Avian Medicine and Surgery" by Altman, Clubb, Dorrestein and Quessenberry there is no chapter about prevention and the word prevention is not mentioned in the index.
 - + In: "Avian Medicine: Principles and Application" by Ritchie, Harrison and Harrison there is chapter by Ritchie "Future Preventative Medicine" and this is the only reference in the index mentioned as keyword prevention.
 - + In: "Clinical Avian Medicine" by Harrison and Lightfoot there is one chapter by Phalen "Preventive Medicine" about the prevention of transmissible diseases. In the index prevention is mentioned in 5 different chapters.
- 9 At Avian Medicine conferences, when case reports are presented and discussed, rarely is time spend on the question of how the problem could have been prevented.
- 10 In medicine for Poultry, Cattle and Pigs most of the science and research is about prevention. Farmers are for good reasons very interested in preventing problems.
- 11 In small animal medicine the major emphasis is on prevention, using vaccinations, first puppy/kitten checks, parasite prevention and annual examinations. Spay and neuter are a mainstay of preventative medicine.
- 12 Puppy courses are established for 40+ years to prevent behaviour problems and direct desired behaviour.
- 13 Both small and large animal owners can name their veterinarian, whereas most parrot owners when asked "who is your avian veterinarian " will answer; "so far I never needed a veterinarian and I don't know an avian veterinarian.
- 14 Ask a dog/cat breeder, who is your veterinarian and you will get an answer in 2 seconds

- 15 Ask a parrot/bird breeder: who is your avian veterinarian? The answer is predictable.
- 16 Compared with poultry veterinarians, within avian medicine there are very few avian veterinarians that are focussing on the management of birds within aviculture. Dealing with avicultural medicine is mainly focussing on prevention.
- 17 What have we done wrong the past 30-40 years that we as avian veterinarians are not recognised as the ones who are important as advisors to consult to prevent problems and help correct behavior issues?
- 18 Considering the importance of management of companion birds concerning nutrition, housing, care , behaviour. The question is what is the level of expertise among avian veterinarians in this field.
- 19 Considering the importance of proper management of birds within aviculture considering nutrition, housing, care, behaviour and reproduction. The question is what is the level of expertise among avian veterinarians?
- 20 Spreading contagious diseases, dealing with contagious diseases. In dogs, cats, poultry, cattle, pigs and horses there are not just tests but all kind of vaccination programs and preventative protocols developed. In birds there are only diagnostics developed and prevention is hardly considered as part of the solution.
- 21 As we know, most viral diseases we are faced with are a serious problem for birds in captivity. Bornavirus, Circovirus, Polyomavirus are typical examples of diseases that are related to management failures including purchase , nutrition, housing, overpopulation and other stress factors, mutation breeding/inbreeding, keeping birds indoors and birds that are not socialised and show fear in the presence of the caretaker.
- 22 Purchase policy. It is common to buy birds through petshops, traders, internet and bird markets without considering the risk of (contagious) diseases. There is little input from avian veterinarians and no regulations concerning the spread of contagious diseases. Completely the opposite in poultry, pigs, cattle, horses, dogs and cats.
- 23 Breeding policies for shows, mainly/only breeding for external characteristics like colour, shape that may be very different from the color and shape of the same species in nature.
- 24 The policy of breeding mutations – inbreeding is detrimental for the long term health and welfare of species/populations. Problems that we can see in

burgerigars and cockatiels are more and more the result of inbreeding and selective breeding for external characteristics.

- 25 Regarding the many behavior problems we see in birds, the first question is whether the breeding birds are tame or not. What is the relationship between the aviculturists and the birds. Why is it unusual that aviculturists provide their birds with a name? Facing behaviour problems tame or not tame is a major question.
- 26 Hand reared parrots are vulnerable to viral diseases. Creating different age groups within a facility is a major preventative tool. In poultry the one age group policy is obvious. The same for pigeon lofts where age groups are separated.
- 27 The development of hand rearing as part of the policy and management within aviculture has created behaviour and health problems in breeding birds. What has been the role of avian veterinarians?
- 28 In the Netherlands, since July 1st 2014, hand rearing is prohibited by law as it has been prohibited by law in dogs, cats, rabbits, chimpanzees and other species for decades. This is the first legislation to prevent behavior and health problems in parrots.
- 29 It is important to educate veterinary students about the prevention of problems. Knowing how to prevent a problem is also providing tools that are important to solve a problem.
- 30 Not knowing how to prevent a problem is not knowing how to solve a problem either.
- 31 Educating students and interested veterinarians about prevention will enhance the health and welfare of birds. It will make avian medicine grow and become more valued by bird owners.
- 32 We know the expression: Better to prevent a problem than to cure a problem.

The question is why is avian medicine and why are avian veterinarians not focussing on preventing problems?

