

Psittacosis

Agent: *Chlamydophila psittaci* (formerly known as *Chlamydia psittaci*) (bacteria)

Mode of Transmission: Transmission usually occurs when a person inhales organisms that have been aerosolized from dried feces or respiratory tract secretions of infected birds. Other means of exposure include mouth-to-beak contact and handling of infected birds' feathers or tissues.

Signs/Symptoms: Most commonly fever, headache, weakness, loss of appetite, muscle aches, chills, sore throat, and cough. Symptoms can present as a mild flu-like illness or can be very severe, especially in older persons.

Prevention: Preventive measures include proper design and management of facilities that raise and sell birds and use of protective clothing (e.g., wearing of masks or respirators and gloves) by those working with birds. Bird cages should be cleaned regularly with disinfectants and the contents of the cage should be disposed of properly.

Other Important Information: Birds may or may not show signs of illness when infected. Chlamydial organisms have been isolated from over 460 bird species, but are most commonly identified in psittacine (parrot-type) birds, especially cockatiels and budgerigars (also called parakeets or budgies). Among caged, nonpsittacine birds, infection with *C. psittaci* occurs most frequently in pigeons and doves.

No cases of psittacosis were reported in Virginia during 2010. The last case was reported in 2003 and before that, one case was reported in 1998.