

## **Psittacosis**

Agent: *Chlamydophila* (formerly *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 handling of feathers or tissues from infected birds and laboratory exposure.

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. People who work with birds or have birds as companion animals who experience symptoms compatible with psittacosis should bring this potential exposure to their healthcare providers' attention.

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). In the United States, infection with *C. psittaci* occurs most frequently from psittacine birds, pigeons, and turkeys. People who raise, sell or keep birds should consult with a licensed veterinarian about protocols and best practices for preventing and treating avian psittacosis.

No cases of psittacosis were reported in Virginia during 2012. The last case was reported in 2003 and before that, one case was reported in 1998.