

Avian Blood Evaluation

Birds are much more adept than even our dog and cat friends at hiding illness. After all, in a bird's mind, if you look or act ill, you will be someone's dinner. As avian medicine has advanced and our ability to help our feathered friends has grown, so have the ways to detect disease. Just as with any species, early detection and treatment are more likely to result in good outcomes. Described below are several commonly used tests to evaluate your bird's health. We recommend yearly "well bird" screenings for all our avian patients. After all, we expect them to grow old with us!

Complete Blood Count (CBC)—this test evaluates the numbers of white blood cells, red blood cells, types of white blood cells, platelet numbers, and hematocrit. White blood cell numbers rise with such problems as bacterial infections. The numbers may decrease with viral problems. Then, the types of white blood cells must be examined to help determine if the problem is acute or chronic and if the body is responding. The number of red blood cells, known as the hematocrit or packed cell volume, tells if the patient is anemic, normal, or dehydrated.

Blood Profiles—this is a series of tests that evaluate organs, such as the liver and kidneys, along with looking at electrolytes such as calcium. Function tests, such as bile acid tests that evaluate function of the liver, can also be done. Glucose levels can screen for diabetes. There are many more values and bits of information that can be obtained.

Blood Metal Levels—most commonly we are evaluating bird's exposure to such toxic metals as lead and zinc. Both can cause chronic or acute life threatening disease problems including anemia.

Psittacosis Tests—There are a variety of tests available to screen your pet for this disease, which is not only deadly for him/her, but also is a contagious and possibly a deadly disease for you.

Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease Test—there is a DNA probe test done on blood to screen for this deadly and devastating disease.

Aspergillosis Tests—There are several ways to try and pinpoint this elusive fungal disease. If caught early, the disease can be treated, so early detection is essential. Aspergillosis can spread quickly and lead to death.

While there are more tests available for other conditions, this represents some of the most commonly used tests for avian medicine.

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