

Avian Vaccinations

There are numerous vaccines for a variety of different diseases available and in use today for a variety of avian species. Early vaccines for Psittacines were aimed at wild caught and imported birds that were housed with other imported birds that may carry such devastating diseases as Pacheco's virus, pox, salmonella, and pasteurella. Vaccines also play an important role in the protection of other species not commonly kept as pets, such as chickens, that are vital to the economy. Some commonly encountered terminology along with descriptions of two vaccines-one available and one being developed-follow.

Vaccine types fall into three main categories:

Modified Live Vaccines produce infection without disease so the immune response is incited. Although rare, there is a risk of reversion back to the disease producing organism or attenuation (change) that may not be protective against a field, or wild strain, of the virus or bacteria.

Killed Vaccines rely on growing the organism in the laboratory and then inactivating or killing it so that it cannot replicate and therefore not produce disease.

Subunit Vaccines identify a portion of the organism, usually a protein, which will incite the host immune response. This protein's gene code is then placed in another organism that will produce the protein. Since only a portion of the disease-causing agent is in the vaccine, the disease cannot be obtained through the vaccine.

Although there are numerous avian vaccines available, most are not used routinely in psittacine species unless faced with disease outbreak as part of the effort to control the outbreak. Polyoma virus is the exception.

Polyoma virus has caused countless numbers of sickness and death in many species of birds. Mortality rates reach as high as 95% in young birds stricken with the disease. Adults can also die from the polyoma virus, although less commonly. The vaccine for polyoma virus has proven safe and effective. Please see the brochure titled Facts You Should Know About Avian Polyoma Virus for more information. Feel free to ask our staff any further questions you may have about this or any other vaccine.

Chlamydia psittaci (psittacosis) are still under investigation. In 1996 at the Association of Avian Veterinarians Conference, information was shared that indicated injectable form trials of a vaccine had failed. The researchers were looking next at an intranasal vaccine (which is much the way natural infection would be acquired). As information is forthcoming, we will pass on the updates! Please see the AAV brochure on Chlamydiosis in Birds for more information on this important zoonotic disease.

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