

Passerines

What about the “little guy”—Passerines?

Passerines are a group of birds that include canaries through finches and crows through jays, and encompasses over half of the bird population. Our little ones are very popular, being gregarious, with beautiful songs, and requiring little human attention.

They are fascinating, and once you fall in love with these little guys, it tends to last forever. Because we at Exotic Animal Care Center want you to have healthy, lasting love, we’ve put together some ways you can keep your feathered friend singing.

Just as in the bigger species of birds (i.e. parrots), it is a **MUST** to bring in any new canary or finch for a checkup before just throwing it into your collection. I cannot tell you how many times a client has said, "Well, he **LOOKED** healthy, and he was from a **FRIEND...**" about the new little bird that spread a deadly infection to all her others.

The problem is that the little guys mask disease just as well as the larger species. Merely "quarantining" for a few weeks does not guarantee you will be able to tell who is sick. A very nice client, Linda, brought two ostensibly healthy gouldians into her group of cordon bleu finches, and has had trouble ever since, including air sac mites, fatal virus, and even tuberculosis!

So don't underestimate the "new guy." Some of the ways we can tell if a small bird is sick include checking a fecal sample for bacteria, parasites and yeast. We can take a tiny amount of blood and DNA test it for multiple diseases. And we can even take a quick x-ray if need be. If one or more of your group **DOES** start to fluff up, sit lower on the perch or stop vocalizing, **SEPARATE HIM** immediately.

Place the "dumpy" bird in a small, quiet setting with low or no perches, food on the floor and warmth. You can use a heat lamp or heat pad under the cage to get the ambient temperature to 85 degrees. This is ideal to prevent unnecessary energy expenditure while Tweety is trying to get well. The best way to prevent a problem in the first place is to ask the seller for an agreement that if the vet finds a problem within a week of purchase, you can return/exchange your new bird. If you want to care for him yourself, please remember not to handle your well birds without disinfecting your hands and changing clothes after handling your little sick one.

Some of the most common and treatable conditions in canaries and finches are listed below:

1. Air Sac Mites: These little buggers cause increases in respiratory rate and sometimes audible wheezing. TREATMENT: Ivermectin
2. Scaly Leg Mites: Causing crusty skin on legs, these bugs are also TREATED with Ivermectin
3. Avian Gastric Yeast: Once thought to be a bacteria, this large yeast found in the gut can cause diarrhea, fluffing, and general malaise. TREATMENT: Amphotericin-B, Sodium Benzoate, or Nystatin.
4. Mycoplasma Conjunctivitis: Causing redness and swelling of one or both eyes, this is a serious bacterial infection that is very treatable if addressed right away. Some birds may turn into carriers after treatment.
5. Bacterial Infection of gastrointestinal tract: Causes large “puffy” stools or diarrhea, persistent color change in stool. TREATMENT: Appropriate antibiotic, aided by running a culture and sensitivity test.
6. Tuberculosis: Chronic and difficult to detect, there is no good treatment.
7. Internal parasites: Diagnosed by running a microscopic fecal test, they are treated once diagnosed, with the appropriate targeted deworming agent.
8. Poxvirus and papillomavirus: Both cause skin and/or mucous membrane lesions. Poxvirus can be fatal and we do have a vaccine against it. This is recommended for flock situations. Papillomavirus causes warty growths on the legs and feet. TREATMENT: Supportive.

Please be sure to bring any new birds to your avian specialist after purchase or adoption. This way you can all have a happy, healthy life together!