The goal of this course is to provide you with a basic understanding of avian health terms, concepts and biosecurity.
What is a Bird Disease?

- Disease is a change from normal health, not including injury
  - Effects of disease can include:
    - Reduced egg production
    - Failure to thrive
    - Increased death loss
  - Disease may be infectious or non-infectious
    - Infectious diseases are spread between birds
    - Non-infectious diseases are not spread between birds
Recognizing Disease

• Disease changes may be subtle
  – Know what “normal” or “healthy” looks like for your bird
  – It can be difficult to recognize when your bird is sick, especially in the early phases of illness
Recognizing Disease

• Examine your birds on a daily basis to look for early signs of illness such as:
  – Sneezing
  – Coughing
  – Reduced intake of feed and water

• Birds may appear healthy, but:
  – May still carry diseases (“carriers”) or
  – Be in the early stages of illness
Infectious Diseases

- Infectious diseases are caused by:
  - Bacteria
    - Salmonella Pullorum-Typhoid
    - Mycoplasma Gallisepticum
  - Viruses
    - Avian Influenza
    - Marek’s Disease
    - Newcastle Disease
  - Fungi
    - Aspergillosis
Infectious Diseases Continued

– Parasites
  • Internal
    – Worms
      » Round Worms
    – Protozoa
      » Coccidiosis
  • External
    – Lice
    – Mites
Disease Symptoms

- **General symptoms**
  - Ruffled feathers
  - Weight loss
  - Decreased appetite
  - Drooping wings
  - Depressed behavior (pet birds)
  - Failure to stand on perches (pet birds)

- **Digestive system**
  - Persistent watery diarrhea
  - Vomiting feed or water

- **Respiratory system**
  - Sneezing
  - Coughing
  - Nasal discharge
  - Gasping for air
  - Labored breathing
Disease Symptoms Continued

- Reproductive system
  - Decreased egg production
  - Malformed eggs
  - Low fertility

- Nervous system
  - Weakness
  - Circling
  - Muscle tremors
  - Severe depression
  - Twisting of head or neck
  - Lameness
  - Paralysis
Disease control is based on three areas of control:

- Increasing **bird** resistance to disease
- Reducing exposure to pathogens (**germs**)
- Reducing environmental **stress**
Increasing Bird Resistance

• Ensure proper nutrition
  – Provide adequate, clean food and water
  – Monitor weight periodically
  – Feed pet birds more than seeds (fruits, leafy vegetables, sprouted seeds)

• Locate an avian veterinarian before you need one

• Consult your veterinarian in the event of disease or before beginning treatment
Increasing Bird Resistance Cont.

- Antibiotics do not work against viral diseases and no antiviral drugs are available for birds.
Medications & Vaccinations

- Store drugs and vaccines correctly
  - Check expiration dates
  - Discard when expired

- Follow instructions on the vaccine or medication label

- Vaccinate your birds against diseases known to exist in the area where you live
Reducing Stress

• Provide your birds with adequate:
  – Space
  – Ventilation
  – Shade

• Control dust in your pens
  – Dust creates stress on the respiratory system

• Maintain proper temperature

• Provide toys to encourage activity for pet birds
How Does Disease Spread?

- Diseases are spread in two ways:
  - Direct Contact: contact between a sick bird and a healthy bird
    - Direct Contact occurs through contact with:
      - Feathers
      - Waste
      - Droplets from the mouth or nose
  - Indirect Contact: contact with objects contaminated by a sick bird
Indirect Contact

- Dirty hands of handlers
- Contaminated clothes or boots
- Contaminated equipment
- Contaminated vehicles (tires, floorboards)
- Contact with other animals, insects, rodents, birds, etc
Biosecurity

- Biosecurity is the set of practices that prevent your bird from being exposed to infectious diseases.
Biosecurity Continued

• Before entering the bird area
  – Wear clean clothes
  – Scrub your shoes with disinfectant
  – Wash your hands

• Clean and disinfect where your birds live
  – Remove all old litter, manure, and other debris
  – Clean surfaces, then apply a disinfectant
  – Some disinfectants can be toxic to birds, check with your avian veterinarian for recommendations
  – **Note:** If you do not clean first, applying disinfectants is a waste of time and money!
Biosecurity Continued

• Separate your birds from:
  – Wild waterfowl
  – Rodents
  – Other animals
  – Visitors
    • If visitors have birds of their own, do not let them near your birds

• Prevent contact with other animals and birds
  – Keep your birds in pens or in an enclosure
Biosecurity Continued

• Limit handling and contact of your birds by other people

• Isolate new or sick birds for at least 21 days (3 weeks)
  – Have your birds been to a fair or exhibit?
    • They should be separated from the rest of your flock when you return home
Biosecurity Continued

• Don’t borrow equipment and supplies from other bird owners
  – If you bring these items home, clean and disinfect them before you get to your property

• Disinfect your hands before and after handling someone else’s birds

• Sterilize grooming instruments before and after each use
  – Use a clean holding towel with each bird
Biosecurity For Pet Stores

• Have customers disinfect their hands before handling any birds

• Display birds behind glass barriers to prevent their exposure to customers carrying germs

• Have employees caring for pet birds:
  – Wear clean clothes at work each day
  – Disinfect their hands before and after handling birds
Report a Sick Bird

Contact the WSDA Avian Health Program if your birds are sick

1-800-606-3056

lbadcoe@agr.wa.gov
Helpful Links

http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/AvianHealth/

Helpful Contacts

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