Vomiting and Regurgitation

It is very difficult at times to differentiate regurgitation and vomiting. Both involve bringing up food and expelling it from the beak.

Regurgitation to a mate, person or toy is a normal part of breeding behavior. A bird that is regurgitating or vomiting will make a head-bobbing and neck-stretching type of movement. Food will be brought up and deposited on the bird's toys or mate. Such controlled regurgitation usually does not result in staining of the feathers or the beak.

Bacterial, viral and fungal gastrointestinal causes, obstructions, toxins and liver or kidney problems may also cause regurgitation or vomiting.

Vomiting, on the other hand, is usually a rapid flick of the head, which is often not noticed by pet bird owners. Tell-tale signs of vomiting in birds is the flicking of small pieces of ingesta around the cage and on top of the birds head. Food may become caked on the bird's head giving it a spiky, matted appearance. Vomiting often occurs along with regurgitation and is a serious clinical sign.

If you suspect that this behavior is the result of illness, a veterinarian should examine your bird.

Possible Underlying Causes:

Heavy metal poisoning, as well as proventricular, ventricular or lower alimentary tract diseases are possible causes. However, anything that disrupts the normal gastric secreting or grinding functions of the proventriculus and ventriculus may lead to a secondary overgrowth of bacteria or fungi in the small and large intestines. Foreign bodies obstructions (usually seen in nestlings and fledgling birds kept on inappropriate substrates, such as wood chips or saw dust.

Parasitic, fungal, viral and bacterial infections can all cause inflammation of the oral cavity, oesophagus and crop. Avian pox is probably the most common viral cause of pharyngitis and oesophagitis, but lesions in other organs including the skin and respiratory tract are also usually present and are of more importance.

Primary bacterial and fungal infections are relatively rare and are usually secondary to vitamin A deficiency or other organisms or agents that disrupt the normal mucosal defense mechanisms.
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