

VITAMIN A DEFICIENCY IN BIRDS

Hypovitaminosis A, or Vitamin A deficiency, is common in birds that are on a poor diet. Birds fed only seeds are especially vulnerable. Vitamin A deficiency causes the bird's body to become more susceptible to infections. Symptoms depend on which area of the body is affected, but the respiratory system is often where this deficiency shows up. The mouth is one of the first places where signs would be evident.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF VITAMIN A DEFICIENCY

- Small white plaques on the roof of the mouth and/or at the base of the tongue.
- Large abscesses will become evident as the plaques become infected.
- Laboured breathing will begin as the abscesses close off the airway.
- Eventually you will see nasal discharge and obvious swelling around the eyes.
- The bird may also display sneezing, wheezing, nasal discharge, crusted or plugged nostrils, lethargy, diarrhea, tail-bobbing, loss of weight, swollen eyes & eye discharge, lack of appetite, gagging, foul-smelling breath and "slimy mouth".

TREATMENT

Birds don't usually die of Vitamin A deficiency, but of the secondary infections. If your bird is deficient, your vet will give her injections to increase her levels of Vitamin A. The vet will also have to treat her secondary infections, which will be tested for. Your bird may be hospitalized and nebulized (given medication through inhalation).

PREVENTION

To help your bird ward off a Vitamin A deficiency, offer her foods high in Vitamin A, such as carrots, cantaloupe, papaya, sweet potatoes, chili peppers, broccoli leaves and flowers, turnip leaves, collards, endive, beets, and dandelion greens. Ask your vet if you should be adding a daily supplement to your bird's diet, also.