

HEAVY METAL POISONING IN BIRDS

Birds love to chew on things, and when the object they're chewing has toxic substances in it, that can be very dangerous for your bird.

TOXIC METALS

- Brass
- Lead
- Zinc
- Tin
- Copper
- Cadmium
- Mercury

SIGNS OF HEAVY METAL POISONING

- Diarrhea, greenish in color
- Rust-red colored stool
- Stumbling, unable to perch
- Paralysis
- Blindness
- Vomiting
- Lethargy
- Convulsions and seizures
- Pneumonia when volatile vapors are inhaled, especially with mercury poisoning
- Long-term poisoning: Poor feather condition, darkened feathers, and weak feathers
- Long-term poisoning: Weak and deformed beak.

DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosis of heavy metal poisoning can be difficult. Your vet may do a Complete Blood Count to look for a rise in white blood cells. X-Rays can sometimes show heavy metals in the gizzard.

TREATMENT

If X-Rays show toxic metals in the gizzard, your vet may try to remove it. Feeding high-fibre foods may help to dislodge it, or a special substance that binds to the metals, called Calcium EDTA or Calcium Versenate, may be given to your bird. As a last resort, your vet may end up performing surgery.

PREVENTION

Birds should always be supervised when they are outside their cages to assure that they don't chew on anything that could have toxic metals in it. Any sources of toxic metals (lead curtain weights, stained glass, old paint, costume jewellery, etc) should be removed from the home. Toys and cages should be made of bird-safe materials.