

Psittacosis in Birds at the Birmingham Zoo Aviary

The Alabama Department of Public Health has confirmed a recent psittacosis infection, *Chlamydia psittaci* in several birds at the Birmingham zoo. *Chlamydia psittaci* is a Zoonotic disease which can sometimes be transmitted to people. Symptoms include fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, and a dry cough that can develop into pneumonia. Symptoms usually occur 3-14 days following exposure, but longer incubation periods can occur. Rarely, severe cases will present with or develop a sepsis like picture with multi-organ failure.

Patients who present with flu-like symptoms and have a history of contact with the birds at the Birmingham Zoo aviary within the past 30 days should be evaluated for this illness. Contact the ADPH Division of Epidemiology to report symptomatic cases. Surveillance staff will assist in completing a Psittacosis Investigation Form to be faxed to 334-206-3734 or cdfax@adph.state.al.us.

For specimen collection and submission questions contact the Bureau of Clinical Laboratories (BCL) Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID) at (334) 260-3429.

- The preferred testing method is PCR.
- Ideally specimens should be taken before antibiotics are administered.
- Specimens should include Nasopharyngeal (NP) and/or Oropharyngeal (OP) swabs, in addition to any lower respiratory tract specimen including bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL) and sputum.
- Swabs should be placed in universal transport medium.
- All specimens can be kept refrigerated if shipped if within less than 72 hours of collection; otherwise specimen should be kept frozen. Refrigerated specimen should be sent on ice packs. Frozen specimen should be sent on dry ice.
- Locate and complete the BCL requisition form online at ww.adph.org/bcl. Indicate Microbiology-PCR Test: *Chlamydia psittaci* and include the patient's exposure and brief clinical summary.

The recommended treatment is doxycycline with duration of treatment for 10-14 days after the temperature returns to normal. Macrolides such as azithromycin and erythromycin can be considered for pregnancy and children. Some fluoroquinolones have in-vitro activity against *C. psittaci*, but there are few clinical studies available to establish their role in the treatment of psittacosis.

For questions regarding exposures contact Dr. Dee W. Jones at the ADPH Division of Epidemiology, 1-800-338-8374, or Dr. Ed Khan at the Jefferson County Department of Health at (205) 933-9110.