



Crop Tubing in Birds

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It is possible to effectively dose some birds with an eye dropper, just into the side of their beak. If the medication is bland or sweet they will drink it quite well, e.g., Amoxil Drops. All the smaller parrots will take it quite well that way. For more accurate dosing and so that you can be sure that they get it, it is ideal to learn how to use a crop tube. It can be used not only for medications but for force feeding birds that are sick and not eating. Glucose in water and hand rearing mixtures can also easily be administered this way. Quite often this will help keep your birds alive.

Some people use crop tubes for hand rearing birds. Like any manipulative skill it takes time for you to get your confidence. It is a good idea to start off on something cheap and learn how to do it so that you are confident and calm in an emergency. A lot of people routinely use their crop needles for worming their birds. In Western Australia they use Nilverm, I think most people in the Eastern side of the country use Panacur 2.5. I recommend this at a dose rate of 0.4ml per 100gm body weight. This dose is repeated 10 days later.

The technique is as follows. I like to hold the bird in my left hand with its head between my thumb and forefinger. The side of my thumb runs down alongside the crop. As I pass the needle I can feel it running down the side of my thumb as it goes into the crop. This means it is not into the windpipe. As well the thumb provides a little support and makes it less likely that I will put the needle through the side of the crop wall. I have seen some overzealous people actually puncture the crop with a crop needle, so you need to take a little care, and never force it. It should flow smoothly. The hard part with parrots is to get it over that tongue. Some of them use their tongue and just play with the end of your crop needle. I was doing some big Cockatoos the other day and they can be a real challenge. Don't get frustrated with them and try to rush, otherwise you can do some damage. So all you do is to force the bird's mouth open and on the opposite side to your thumb push the needle over the back of the tongue and slowly down the neck so that you can feel it running down the side of your thumb. Then once it is down in the crop, squirt the fluid in slowly. One thing you learn with experience is just how much fluid you can put down any particular bird. If you pass it slowly it is amazing the volume it will accept. If you squirt 1ml down a Budgie or Neophema it will regurgitate half back straight away. But if you take a little time and slowly drip it in through the crop tube or needle it will keep it all down. This is particularly important when you are dosing sick birds if you are wanting to get as much in as you can at one sitting.

This is certainly a technique you should all learn. One day it will save the life of one of your birds.

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