



## *The Avicultural Society of New South Wales (ASNSW)*

*(Founding in 1940 as the Parrot & African Lovebird Society of Australia)*

*PO Box 248, Panania NSW 2213, Australia*

## **Some Thoughts on Worms!**

*(ASNSW Avicultural Review September 1986 Vol 8 No 9)*

**by Gordon Marion**

For all those people who have become lazy with worming their birds, or think it is not worth it, you could be looking for trouble. When we moved to the Blue Mountains, I made all my aviaries closed in and the floors were concrete. I thought that this would solve my problems with worming my birds... **WRONG!**

For the first few years I kept up the worming, but as I found no worms on the floor after I had wormed the birds, or in any that I did a post post-mortem on, I stopped worming them. New birds were always wormed and quarantined. Things went well for a few years. However, late last year everything went wrong. I lost birds with thread worms and tapeworms. I had never had these worms in my birds before, only roundworms. So it's back to the job of worming them again.

The birds that had these worms were all finches. They were fed on dry seed, greens, egg and biscuit mix. For live food I use meal worms and maggots.

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## **Tapeworms and Gizzard Worms!**

*(ASNSW Avicultural Review September 1986 Vol 8 No 9)*

**by Michael Cannon B.V.Sc.**

When Gordon wrote the above article he asked me to comment on his problem.

Worms are one of the most common causes of illness and death in aviculture. The types of worms that are a problem differs from species to species and depends upon the type of aviary environment that is supplied, the level of hygiene and the bird's lifestyle habits.

Gizzard worms and tapeworms can only be picked up by birds that eat insects. This means that they are more of a problem in finches and softbills than they are in parrots. The eggs from either of these worms pass out of the bird in the droppings. These eggs are then eaten by an insect or similar bug and finally passed to the bird when it eats the insect. Birds cannot pick up the eggs directly from the floor.

The insects that have been shown to be a problem in this respect are:

*Grasshoppers, cockroaches, weevils, sand hoppers, slaters, pill bugs, sow bugs, beetles, ants, earwigs, snails, slugs, flies, earthworms; and others may also be involved.*

Treatment involves attacking the worms in two areas.

The first is to remove the insects from the floor of the aviary as it is the insects that are coming in contact with your birds' droppings that are the main threat. Regular spraying of the aviary floor including any nooks or crannies where they might hide, with an insecticide such as Coopex, is useful. Remove all dishes, etc., that may lie on the floor and provide shelter for the insects. Design the aviary floor so that there are no damp patches as the worm eggs can live a lot longer in warm moist conditions. The fewer eggs that are around, the less chance they will be picked up by an insect that happens to wander into your aviary.

The second area of your attack on the worms is to use drugs to kill the worms in the birds. This measure alone is not useful unless combined with the above assault on the insect population in the aviary.

Tapeworms are treated with either Mansonil in the drinking water or Droncit in cake or similar food supplement. Mansonil does not dissolve well in water and tends to settle to the bottom, so regular stirring is required. Droncit is a new drug to be used but initial results are quite encouraging.

Gizzard worms are more difficult to kill. Some people have found that they resist all drugs they have tried, while others have had success with Nilverm or Telmin in the drinking water. It is apparent that it is best to avoid the problem altogether by using insect control as well as providing good levels of aviary hygiene and sanitation rather than try to treat the birds. The main complication that can be seen with treatment is if the drug is so effective that it kills all the worms at once and their dead bodies cause a blockage in the intestines. This has been reported with Telmin when used to kill tapeworms in one finch collection.

From a legal point of view it is always difficult for a vet to give a wholehearted recommendation of any of the drugs mentioned that are registered for use in birds and any such use must be regarded as experimental. It is quite unlikely that this will change in the foreseeable future.

While I cannot recommend the following doses, I will include them to report what people have used.

### **Gizzard Worm:**

- Nilverm Oral LV (80mg/ml) at 1ml per litre of drinking water for 3 days. NB: There are other strengths of Nilverm on the market. If a different strength is used the dose will also be different.
- Panacur 2.5 (25mg/ml) at 2ml per litre of water for 3 days. NB: Panacur 10 has been associated with deaths even when watered down to the correct strength.

### **Tapeworm:**

- Mansonil Powder has been used in many ways.
  - 1g powder per 200g seed mixed well. Give a new batch daily for 4 days.
  - 1 teaspoon of powder per litre of drinking water. Stir frequently.
- Droncit Tablets (50mg) have recently been tried many ways.
  - 1 tablet per 500ml drinking water for 24 hours. The main problem is that it does not dissolve well and so needs frequent stirring.
  - Crush 1 tablet in 100ml water and use this to apply to soaked seed, cake, etc. At a dose of 50mg/kg, 1 tablet would be used for 50 small (20mg) finches.

**NB:** Some people have had success with the above while others have not. Experiments are being carried out on newer drugs to assess their usefulness. Only time will tell. One complication to be aware of is that some birds may die from dehydration rather than drink medicated water. Observe the birds to be certain that they are indeed drinking and avoid worming on hot days. If possible give the birds any drugs in the food in preference to using drinking water. By adding the drug to a small amount of a food supplement that you know the bird will readily eat, you can encourage the bird to take it more easily. It is easier to mask the odour of the drug and you can be sure the bird takes in the amount of drug that is required.

Useful foods to add drugs to are:

*Cake, soaked seed, egg and biscuit mix, apple, etc.*

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