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## What is Giardia?

Giardia is a parasite that is found in the small intestine of infected birds, dogs, cats, humans, and other mammals. It is shed in the feces and is able to survive outside of the animal, with birds in such places as perches, food bowls, cage bars, play gyms, and water. People, birds, and other animals become infected when they ingest the parasite. Giardia occurs frequently in budgies, cockatiels, lovebirds, African Grays, and gray cheeked parakeets, although other species also become infected when ingesting the parasite.

## Can I tell if my bird has Giardia?

Birds will often appear without symptoms, but can show signs of loose droppings, weakness, anorexia, depression, yeast infections. Some birds will start itching as a result and may tear out their feathers, sometimes screaming as they do, or act like they have fleas, most likely in their flank and leg areas.

## Testing for Giardia

There are several tests for Giardia available and in use by avian vets:

1. Fecal Trichrome. Tests for the Giardia parasite itself. This test is usually sent out to a laboratory.
2. ELISA Tests. Tests for the antibodies produced by the bird to combat the parasite. Can be done in-house.
3. Other specialized tests are available, such as Crypto/Giardia IFA and fecal stain.

Note: We believe that the fecal trichrome test is the most reliable test for diagnosing Giardia. We have evidence of birds that have tested negative under other test methods and then test positive using the fecal trichrome. For the best possible results, collection of the first morning feces will provide the best opportunity to detect the parasite, since Giardia is not consistently shed in the feces. (For most larger birds this will be the "morning big one." For smaller birds, such as budgies and cockatiels, they don't have a "morning big one," so the important issue is to make sure that the sample is collected fresh, within minutes.) Collection of THREE samples over a period of 3 to 5 days is optimum for catching the organism.

Birdsafe.com is offering a mail-in Giardia Screening Test. Please visit our site for more information.

The good news about Giardia is that it is treatable. If your bird tests positive, seek assistance from your vet. Any treatment should ALWAYS be done through your avian vet.

We encourage you to talk to your vet about Giardia, the various tests used, and treatment. We invite your vet to call or write us to discuss the issue.