

Zoonoses of Australian wild birds

Fact sheet

Introductory statement

A literature survey identified 1407 recognised species of human pathogen, 58% of which are zoonotic. Of these 177 are regarded as emerging or re-emerging, with 73% of these being zoonotic (Woolhouse and Gowtage-Sequeria 2005).

Prevention of infection with zoonotic diseases generally involves common sense procedures such as washing hands with soap after handling animals or their by-products, and before eating or smoking. There should be no oral contact with animals and only properly cooked meat should be consumed. Table 1 presents a list of the common zoonoses of Australian wild birds.

Table 1. Common zoonoses in Australian wild birds

Pathogen	Species affected	Main routes of infection to humans	Clinical symptoms in humans	Treatment	Prevention
<i>Chlamydia psittaci</i>	Birds	Inhalation	Flu-like	Antibiotics	Hand hygiene, wear gloves when handling dead birds
Murray Valley encephalitis virus	Birds, mainly waterbirds	Mosquito bite	Fever, vomiting, lethargy, headache, meningitis, death	Symptomatic	Avoid mosquito bites
<i>Mycobacterium avium</i>	Birds	Inhalation	Pneumonia	Antibiotics	Hygiene including hand hygiene
<i>Salmonella</i> spp., <i>Campylobacter</i> spp., <i>Giardia</i> spp., <i>Cryptosporidium</i>	Birds	Ingestion	Diarrhoea	Supportive, antibiotics, antiprotozoals	Hand hygiene
Avian influenza virus	Birds	Inhalation	Fever, headache, myalgia, rhinitis, death	Supportive, antivirals	Avoid secretions from infected birds, hand hygiene

Conclusions

As human settlements continue to expand, encroaching further into wildlife habitat and increasing human contact with other species, the number of recognised zoonotic diseases will likely continue to rise.

References and other information

McManus TJ. Australian wildlife and their role in zoonotic disease. In: *Wildlife*. Proceedings 233 of the Post Graduate Foundation in Veterinary Science, Sydney, 1994:41-55.

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Woolhouse MEJ, Gowtage-Sequeria S. Host range and emerging and re-emerging pathogens. *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 2005;11:1842-1847.

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To provide feedback on this fact sheet

We are interested in hearing from anyone with information on these conditions in Australia, including laboratory reports, historical datasets or survey results that could be added to the National Wildlife Health Information System. If you can help, please contact us at admin@wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au.

Wildlife Health Australia would be very grateful for any feedback on this fact sheet. Please provide detailed comments or suggestions to admin@wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au. We would also like to hear from you if you have a particular area of expertise and would like to produce a fact sheet (or sheets) for the network (or update current sheets). A small amount of funding is available to facilitate this.

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