SHORT COMMUNICATION

A CASE OF NEWCASTLE DISEASE IN PÂRROTS IN NAIROBI, KENYA


Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
P.O. Box 29053-00625, Nairobi - Kenya

Newcastle disease is an infectious, highly contagious and devastating disease, mostly affecting chickens, turkeys, wild and ornamental birds. It is reported as the most important viral disease of birds in the World. The disease is endemic in Kenya, causing, most of the times, 100% mortality to unvaccinated birds. Under natural conditions, the virus enters the host through respiratory and digestive tracts.

Factors associated with the respective viral persistence in poultry are not well established. The extensively-managed, free-roaming village chickens are believed to keep the virus in circulation and act as reservoirs and carriers to other village and exotic poultry breeds. This is especially so when it is appreciated that, although clinically diseased chickens are the most important hosts of Newcastle disease virus, latently infected birds and survivors of natural infection, which still harbor the agent, may act as reservoirs. The viral excretion, mainly via respiratory tract and faeces, commences before clinical signs of Newcastle disease occur. Non-chicken poultry are also suspected to play a role in the sustainance and dissemination of the virus. Ducks and geese often reared with chickens under backyard village conditions may be infected and show few or no clinical signs even with strains lethal to the chickens. Wild birds have been shown to harbor Newcastle disease virus and thus partially maintaining it in nature. Virulent Newcastle disease virus has also been frequently isolated from captive caged birds which, in some cases, develop clinical disease. Thus, in order to be able to control the disease, the role of non-chicken poultry in sustainance of Newcastle disease virus needs to be established and control measures put in place. This is important in villages since the respective birds are normally not vaccinated.

This paper reports a case of Newcastle disease in pet parrots located close to a retail outlet, selling live indigenous chickens, within an area, in the outskirts of Nairobi, hosting a number of wild birds, mainly pigeons.

Materials, methods

Specimens brought to the clinic and respective case history

Two African grey parrots, one dead and one live (sick), were brought to the poultry clinic for examination and advice on possible treatment. The parrots were kept together with seven others, as pets, in the owner’s sitting room (the owner had kept parrots, as a hobby, for a period of 2 years). All the birds showed signs of sickness (discomfort, sneezing), but only one died, while the rest eventually recovered. There were no new