

### TUBEFEEDING

Tubefeeding, force feeding or gavage feeding is one of the most important aspects of critical care in avian species. Most avian diseases combine anorexia or decreased appetite with an increase in nutritional needs to fight disease and repair damaged tissues.

The crop evolved in order to allow birds to consume relatively large amounts of food, usually on the ground, and then return to the safety of a high place to digest it. The crop is highly elastic unless diseased and easily accessible for tubefeeding.

The benefits of tubefeeding must be weighed against the stress of restraint in the sick bird. All medications and foods should be prepared prior to catching the bird so handling can be minimized.

I recommend feeding no more than 3 times daily except in ill baby birds, or severe crop disease. In most cases of mild to moderate illness all nutritional needs can be met in one to two feedings daily if sufficient volume is given. This also encourages the bird to self feed between feedings.

Many formulas have been devised for tubefeeding and no one formula is magical. A formula must be balanced, be high in energy and provide sufficient bulk to ensure normal gut motility.

The bird should be held in an upright position with the neck stretched in order to straighten the esophagus. The head should be held just below the mandible. Care should be taken to avoid putting pressure on the esophagus or crop.

I use the following formula which is easy to prepare and fills all the needs of the bird:

High protein monkey chow - soaked in hot water or cooked until softened.

Add fresh squeezed oranges and fresh chopped banana and apple. Powdered or liquid vitamin and mineral supplements may be added. Peanut butter or Lipomul (commercial fatty dietary supplement) may be added for weight gain.

Formula should be thin enough to pour but not watery.

### TUBEFEEDING VOLUMES AND EQUIPMENT

|  |          |                                  | Tube Size |
|--|----------|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Large Macaws and<br>Large Cockatoos              | 40-60 cc | Rubber Bone                      | 18F       |
| Medium Macaws and<br>Cockatoos                   | 30-50cc  | Small Rubber<br>Bone or Speculum | 18F       |
| Amazons, Small Cockatoos<br>African Grey, Pionus | 20-40cc  | Speculum                         | 16-18F    |
| Conures, Lorys                                   | 5-20cc   | Hemastats<br>Speculum            | 12-14F    |

Tubefeeding Volumes and Equipment, Continued

|                     |       |           |         |
|---------------------|-------|-----------|---------|
| Cockatiels          | 3-8cc | Hemastats | 12-14 F |
| Budgies & Lovebirds | 3cc   | Hemastats | 10 F    |

Baby birds can take up to twice as much volume as adults.

Lower volumes should be used initially in order to allow stretching of the crop.

If food backs up into the birds mouth he should be freed back into the cage immediately. He will then clear the food from his mouth to avoid aspiration.

Feeding Tubes - Sovereign Feeding Tubes, Sherwood Medical Industries,  
St. Louis, MO 63103

Speculum - Available from Dorothy Products, 7278 Milwaukee Ave.,  
Niles, Ill 60648