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KNEMIDOKOPTIC MANGE

General Information

While many owners believe parasites are common causes of skin disorders and feather loss in birds, this is usually not the case. However, Knemidokoptic mange, also called “cere mites” is a fairly common disorder, particularly in some of the smaller species of birds.

What causes Knemidokoptic mange?

Knemidokoptic mange is caused by a small microscopic parasite called a mite. The technical name for the particular mite involved is called *Knemidokoptes pilae*.

What species of birds are usually infected?

Most commonly, budgerigars (or budgies) and canaries are infected.

How can I tell if my bird is infected?

There are certain typical lesions that occur in birds with the infection. The lay term for Knemidokoptic mange is “scaly leg and face disease”. Large amounts of honeycombed-looking scales and crusts are noticed on the bird's beak, cere (the area on the face for the nasal openings), and/or legs. In canaries, the lesions are a bit different and cause crusted projections from the legs, giving the condition in canaries its common name of "tassle-foot". Your veterinarian can usually confirm your suspicions with a physical examination and microscopic analysis of the crusts, which will reveal the presence of the mite.

How did my bird become infected?

The disease is usually transmitted as a result of close contact between infected birds. However, it is also felt that there is a genetic predisposition to the condition, as not every bird exposed to an infected one develops the condition.

How is Knemidokoptic mange treated?

Veterinarians most commonly use a drug to kill the microscopic mites. Importantly, bird owners should disinfect the bird's cage, perches, bowls, and toys with a common household cleaner to prevent re-infection. Mite sprays sold at pet stores are usually ineffective in treating the condition; mite protector



devices do not work and contain a class of compound known to cause cancer in people. These mite protectors have been incriminated in the deaths of some birds.