



MEDIA STATEMENT

19 November 2004

Psittacosis in rosellas

Residents of Hill Top in the Southern Highlands are advised to limit contact with parrots following the diagnosis of psittacosis in a wild rosella.

Three Hill Top residents have reported dead rosellas on their properties. One of these birds has been tested and found to have psittacosis.

South Western Sydney Area Health Service Public Health specialist Dr Leon Heron said psittacosis could be transmitted to humans from wild birds but it was uncommon.

“Human psittacosis usually starts with influenza-like symptoms but may develop into pneumonia and require treatment in hospital,” Dr Heron said.

“Timely treatment with effective antibiotics usually results in complete recovery.

“Because psittacosis can be transmitted to humans by birds or their droppings, we advise that Hill Top residents should limit contact with parrots especially sick or dead wild rosellas, at this time,” Dr Heron said.

Residents should take the following precautions to dispose of dead birds and to avoid dust from bird droppings:

- Bury dead birds so that children and pets will not be exposed to them
- Anyone who needs to bury a dead bird should wear a dust mask and disposable gloves and, without causing damage to the bird, carry it to the burial hole on a spade
- Residents doing jobs likely to raise dust from bird droppings should wear a dust mask and gloves and wet the droppings
- Dispose of the gloves and wash your hands before removing the mask
- To ensure that diseased birds are not attracted to your property, do not feed wild birds, at this time

Parrots, including rosellas, naturally carry the microorganism that causes psittacosis.

“It is a part of the natural cycle of the Australian environment that when parrot populations are under stresses such as drought some young birds die of psittacosis,” Dr Heron said.

- For more information go to the NSW Health website at www.health.nsw.gov.au
- For sick birds or any other dead native birds contact the local National Parks and Wildlife Service 4677 0859.

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