

Avian Spirochetes

Spirochetes refers to a type of bacterial shape. Some diseases caused in animals and man by spirochetes include Lyme's Disease, syphilis, leptospirosis, gastric ulcer disease, African Heartwater, Turkey Borreliosis, trenchmouth. A pretty motley collection indeed but we don't believe that oral pet bird spirochetosis is contagious to any but other small parrot species. Spirochete infections occur most commonly in cockatiels originating from an infected aviary. A carrier can be normal for months or may develop a vague illness shortly after purchase. Severe inflammation of the oral cavity is confirmed with a microscope exam of a throat swab. Treatment is often successful but sometimes must be extended with a second or third drug trial.

Recent research suggests that the cockatiel oral spirochete is from the Helicobacter genus, based on DNA probes. Routine bacterial culture will not grow spirochetes.

