

Avian Mycobacteriosis

Occupational Respiratory Infection from Handling Psittacine and Passerine Birds

What is Avian mycobacteriosis?

Avian Tuberculosis is caused by *Mycobacterium avium complex* (comprising multiple closely related mycobacterial species). This does not cause tuberculous lesions in people, but it does cause pulmonary mycobacteriosis. It is found worldwide and may spread through contaminated water or food.

How does infection occur?

These mycobacteria can cause infection in a susceptible host when inhaled as infected aerosols from an infected bird or from fecal-oral ingestion.

What are the symptoms?

In healthy adults *M. avium* is usually asymptomatic; however, some symptoms include cough, fever, fatigue, weight loss, and diarrhea.

How do I prevent it?

Wear appropriate PPE such as a face mask, gloves, and gown when handling birds. Practice good hygiene by washing your hands frequently.

How is it treated?

Members of the *M. avium* complex are difficult to eradicate with antimicrobials because many are resistant to anti-tuberculosis antibiotics.

Resources used:

- Chapter 28, Selected Zoonoses, (2015) *Lab Animal Medicine*, 3rd ed.
- Research Services at Cornell: Avian Mycobacteriosis
- List of Zoonoses - Special Pet Topics – (2016) *Merck Veterinary Manual* 11th ed.