

Gastroparesis & Stomach Blockages in Pet Birds

Carlingford Animal Hospital

Gastroparesis is a condition of the digestive tract whereby normal stomach muscle function has become impaired over time. It occurs as a consequence of long-standing stomach distension (stretching) most often associated with gizzard dysfunction. It may also occur as a result of over-distension of the stomach with undigested foreign matter such as rope, paper, wood or plastic. Ordinarily, strong muscular contractions propel food through the digestive tract. With Gastroparesis however, the movement of food is delayed and the stomach cannot empty properly because it lacks the muscular strength required for healthy digestion.

The ability of the gizzard and stomach muscles to function properly relies on good health. In many cases an underlying health problem is the cause of the weakened gizzard function and poor digestive function. The most common underlying causes of Gastroparesis in adult birds are nutritional deficiencies (calcium, vitamin D or minerals), hormonal imbalances or egg laying activity. In younger birds Gastroparesis is often caused by developmental faults during the weaning period.

Diagnosis & Testing Procedure

Gastroparesis has been diagnosed in your bird following recheck barium meal x-rays. These x-rays have revealed that the stomach remains distended after the initial crop flushing treatment for stomach blockage. This means that the stomach muscles have become partially paralysed and remain overstretched. In this state, the stomach has lost its capacity to properly digest the protein and other nutrients in the food and when left untreated, relapses can occur. Inca Honey is given as part of the Gastroparesis Treatment Plan to prevent the recurrence of stomach blockages. This plan aids healthy digestion and ensures undigested food matter and foreign materials will not accumulate in the stomach again.

Blood tests are always recommended in birds with Gastroparesis to determine the degree of stomach damage, its effect on other organs and the presence of nutritional deficiencies which may have been present for a prolonged period of time. These tests also form the basis of a long term strategy to recover stomach muscle strength and reverse any nutritional deficiencies associated with this problem.

Treatment Plan

The treatment plan incorporates the Gastroparesis Treatment Programme and a special diet of cooked meals to help restore normal digestive function. The Inca Honey Purging Programme may also be prescribed to those birds where undigested foodstuff or foreign matter that remains in the proventriculus (stomach) and/or gizzard following the crop needle stomach flushing procedure. This combined treatment plan is used to stimulate normal stomach digestive function so that food is processed more quickly through the stomach. It also aids in preventing undigested food from re-accumulating in the stomach during the recovery period.

Gastroparesis Treatment Plan

This plan incorporates the Inca Honey Purging Programme and the Gastroparesis Treatment Programme. Dietary modification incorporating cooked meals are also recommended as a means to improve digestive function as part of this treatment programme (see brochure Dietary & Meal Time Recommendations for Healthy Digestion).

The 5 day Inca Honey purging treatment is used in birds where foreign matter residues or undigested food stuff still remains in the stomach/gizzard following a lengthy course of crop needle stomach flushing. The aim of this purging treatment is to prevent further accumulation of food matter or foreign material in the stomach.

Inca Honey Purging Programme (5 Days)

Day	Optional Medication	In Drinking Water	On Sterile Seed	Dietary Recommendations
Day 1	*Medications are mixed with drinking water supplements	Inca Honey & Hi-Cal ¹	Turbobooster, E-Powder, F-Vite & Ve8 Powder ³	<input type="checkbox"/> Cooked beans
Day 2		Inca Honey & Hi-Cal ¹	Turbobooster, E-Powder, F-Vite & Ve8 Powder ³	<input type="checkbox"/> Cooked rice
Day 3		Inca Honey ²	Turbobooster, E-Powder, F-Vite & Ve8 Powder ³	<input type="checkbox"/> Apple puree
Day 4		Inca Honey ²	Turbobooster, E-Powder, F-Vite & Ve8 Powder ³	Disinfect the cage and feeding utensils with KD Powder ⁴
Day 5		Fresh Water	Turbobooster, E-Powder, F-Vite & Ve8 Powder ³	

Mixing Instructions

¹ Mix 1ml Inca Honey & 1ml Hi-Cal thoroughly into 100ml drinking water. May also be given with fruit, vegetables or nectar.

² Mix 3 drops of Inca Honey thoroughly into 100ml drinking water.

³ To 100gm of sterile millet mix (no sunflower for birds diagnosed with concurrent Fatty Liver Disease) add 6 drops of Turbobooster and mix thoroughly. Then, add 1gm (white spoon) each of E-Powder and F-Vite and 0.5gm (1/2 white spoon) Ve8 Powder and mix again so that these powders stick to the Turbobooster oil impregnated seed.

⁴ Mix 1mg KD Powder into 1 litre of water and use this to disinfect the cage and feeding utensils.

The Gastroparesis Treatment Programme is followed for 2-8 weeks to restore healthy stomach function. The length of this treatment plan is determined by the severity of Gastroparesis as well as by monitoring the response to Inca Honey therapy. Therefore, it is important to closely monitor your bird's behaviour and the appearance of the droppings the day after Inca Honey is given. When Inca Honey is needed your bird will be active, happy and noisy, producing well-formed droppings. However, when no longer needed, Inca Honey will irritate the stomach and cause enlarged or watery droppings. This finding may be an indication that the frequency of Inca Honey should be reduced or stopped altogether. If these changes occur, please contact Dr Marshall to discuss the most suitable frequency of Inca Honey for your bird.

Gastroparesis Treatment Plan (2 Weeks)

Day	In Drinking Water	On Sterile Seed	Ongoing Dietary Recommendations
Day 1	KD Powder ¹	Turbobooster, E-Powder, F-Vite & Ve8 Powder ⁵	Continue to provide beans, rice and/or fruit as directed by Dr Marshall as daily shared meals in the morning and evening.
Day 2	Inca Honey & Hi-Cal ²	Turbobooster, E-Powder, F-Vite & Ve8 Powder ⁵	
Day 3	Ioford & Dufoplus ³	Turbobooster, E-Powder, F-Vite & Ve8 Powder ⁵	<input type="checkbox"/> Cooked beans
Day 4	KD Powder ¹	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ⁶	<input type="checkbox"/> Cooked rice
Day 5	Quik Gel ⁴	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ⁶	<input type="checkbox"/> Apple/Orange
Day 6	Inca Honey & Hi-Cal ²	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ⁶	<input type="checkbox"/> Apple puree
Day 7	Inca Honey & Hi-Cal ² or *Fresh Water	Turbobooster, E-Powder & F-Vite ⁶	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

Mixing Instructions

¹ Mix 1gm KD Powder (white spoon) into 1 litre of drinking water. Fill the water vessel and use the remainder to clean the cage.

² Mix 3 drops of Inca Honey & 1ml Hi-Cal thoroughly into 100ml of drinking water. Dose may also be given in fruit, vegetables or nectar.

³ Mix 10 drops Ioford & 5 drops Dufoplus thoroughly into 100ml of drinking water.

⁴ Mix 1 drop Quik Gel into 100ml of drinking water.

⁵ To 100gm of sterile millet mix (no sunflower for birds diagnosed with concurrent Fatty Liver Disease) add 6 drops of Turbobooster and mix thoroughly. Then, add 1gm (white spoon) each of E-Powder and F-Vite and 0.5gm (1/2 white spoon) Ve8 Powder and mix again so that these powders stick to the Turbobooster oil impregnated seed. ⁶ Same as ⁵ but do not add Ve8 Powder.

*Under the instruction of Dr Marshall, this initial 2 week plan may be continued for up to 12 months to completely restore digestive health. The adjusted long-term plan is prescribed for birds when the flushing treatments and initial 2 week plan have not completely resolved the Gastroparesis problem.

This weekly programme is continued for up to 2 weeks after which time a repeat x-ray is taken to ensure stomach function has been completely restored and any bloat or digestive disturbance is no longer present. Recheck cultures are taken to ensure any secondary infections have been successfully treated and a repeat blood test may also be recommended. Once digestive function has been completely restored, the species appropriate ongoing health programme should be followed or in some instances, other digestive support programmes may be recommended.