



# Psittacine Beak & Feather Disease

Beak & Feather Disease (PBFD) is a virus that affects cockatoos and other parrots such as lorikeets. General signs of PBFD are:

- An overgrown beak with a glossy black shine
- Missing feathers / baldness

## Cockatoos

Cockatoos can look normal in the early stages of the disease, which makes it difficult to detect in wild populations. Off-white or dirty looking feathers are signs you can look for. The disease reduces the bird's immune system and makes them susceptible to other illnesses. Changes to their beaks can make it difficult for the bird to feed, while missing feathers compromise their ability to maintain body temperature.

Although they may still be able to fly, it is important for PBFD-diseased cockatoos to be taken to a vet to reduce their suffering. There is no known treatment for this disease and it readily spreads through to other healthy animals.



Overgrown beak and discoloured feathers in a cockatoo.

## Rainbow Lorikeets

Rainbow lorikeets can also be infected by PBFD. The physical signs may not be as obvious as in cockatoos. Typically the feather coloration is altered - there may be more speckles of yellow within the green plumage, and they may have shorter tail and wing feathers.

PBFD can cause lorikeets to lose their ability to fly and infected individuals are often mistaken for juvenile birds (see also Fledglings vs Adult Birds fact sheet). Because of this, infected lorikeets may live with the disease undetected for a long time and sadly, may spread the disease to other birds.



Lorikeet showing yellow blotches on its green plumage, and short wings.

We hope that by increasing your understanding and awareness of our beautiful wildlife, you feel empowered to deal with wildlife situations confidently in an informed, safe and appropriate manner. For support at any time, please call our emergency response service for advice on **03 8400 7300** or report the details on our website: [www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au](http://www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au).



## Psittacine Beak & Feather Disease

Beak and feather disease is extremely contagious. Feathers and dander (skin) left in the environment from infected birds can pass the disease on to healthy individuals. Birds gathering unnecessarily (for example, feeding stations in back yards) creates a situation where the disease can easily be spread.

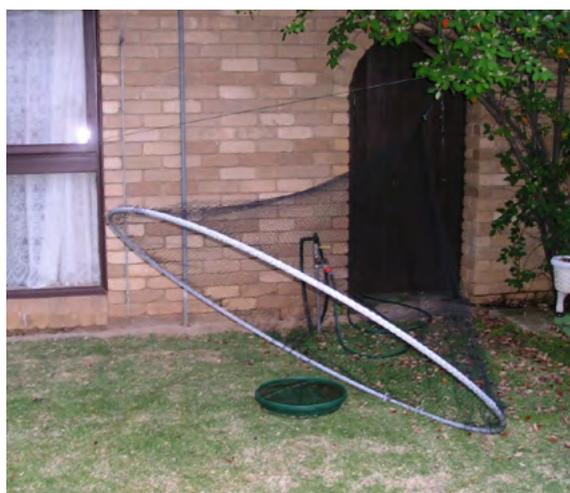
### How you can help

The best chance of rescuing a cockatoo suffering from beak and feather disease, which can still fly, is to set up a trap in order to take it to a vet:

- Set up a large plastic box as a trap (don't use a cardboard box as they chew through these).
- If necessary, attach weights (such as small stones) to the edge of the box to make sure it will drop quickly enough to contain the bird, but make sure they aren't too heavy to injure the bird (test by using your hand to check the impact).
- Use a stick to prop up the plastic box with a length of string on the end (long enough for you to grab the end when the bird is safely in position).
- Establish an ongoing feeding regimen using fruit or bird seed (never bread). This is the only time wild birds should be fed. The bird needs to be fed a short distance from the box, before moving the feeding area closer and closer to the box as the bird becomes more comfortable each day.
- Eventually the feeding area will be underneath the box. Give it a day for the bird to get comfortable feeding in this area and then you can pull the string, releasing the box on top of the bird.
- A lid can then be slid underneath to contain the bird for transporting to a vet clinic immediately for assessment.



Plastic laundry basket trap



Net trap - make sure the mesh is very fine so the bird won't get entangled in it

We hope that by increasing your understanding and awareness of our beautiful wildlife, you feel empowered to deal with wildlife situations confidently in an informed, safe and appropriate manner. For support at any time, please call our emergency response service for advice on **03 8400 7300** or report the details on our website: [www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au](http://www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au).