
AVIAN & EXOTIC CLINIC
of the Monterey Peninsula

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Tracheal Mites in Canaries and other Finches

Tracheal mites (*Sternostoma tracheacolum*) are microscopic tick-like insects that can infect the respiratory tract of some birds. Common in Gouldian and other exotic finches, tracheal mites can also occur in canaries.

Canaries and finches with significant tracheal mites infestations become sick with signs of respiratory disease. Infected birds will often stop singing. Wheezing, gasping, open-mouthed breathing, and respiratory distress may also occur. In some cases a voice change and respiratory click can be heard. Severe cases can result in physical debilitation and in death. Other diseases can mimic these symptoms, including other types of respiratory infections, and foreign body inhalation.

While tracheal mites can sometimes be seen through the skin of the neck, more often visualization and definite diagnosis are not possible. Your veterinarian may choose to treat your bird for *Sternostoma* based on the species of bird you own and its clinical signs. Your veterinarian may also recommend additional testing to check for other diseases, or to check the overall health of your bird.

Treatment for tracheal mite infections consists of giving your bird an antiparasitic medication. The most commonly used drug is called ivermectin. Your veterinarian may recommend multiple doses to be administered at specific intervals. Be sure to follow your veterinarian's instructions carefully, as incomplete dosing will not result in a cure and may foster drug resistance.

Tracheal mites are an infectious disease that spreads from bird to bird. If you have a bird with a tracheal mite infestation, all in-contact birds should also be treated. In addition, new finches should be quarantined and treated before introducing them to your flock, or your birds could become reinfected.