

Dr Geoff Lundie Jenkins
Director Southern Wildlife and Koala Operations
Department of Environment, Science and Innovation

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Wildlife Veterinary Director
RSPCA QLD
139 Wacol Station Road, Wacol QLD

5th March 2024

Dear Geoff,

On the 4th of April 2024 I examined an adult male Australian magpie ("Molly", AID 1438029) currently being held by the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation at your request. Please see a summary of my findings below.

History: Adult male magpie, hand-reared by members of the public, and allegedly kept as a pet for several years. The bird was confiscated by DESI and has been in their care since the 1st of March 2024. The bird was presented to RSPCA QLD for an independent veterinary evaluation.

Clinical findings: An initial conscious examination was performed on the bird in an outside flight aviary. The bird was bright, alert and responsive. The bird exhibited behaviour consistent with human habituation seeking to repeatedly climb up or land on my shoulder and/or head, despite the availability of multiple perches in the aviary. The bird seemed reluctant to fly, but when pressed was observed to fly short distances, up to two metres, with no significant height gained when doing so. Whilst perched the bird intermittently carried both wings in a lower-than-normal position. Based on plumage colouration the bird was determined to be male. The bird weighed 290 grams and was in good body condition.

Anaesthesia was induced and maintained using isoflurane in oxygen administered via mask. On physical examination the bird was found to be in good plumage. The distal most primary flight feathers on both wings were partially ex-sheathed. Both wings exhibited a normal range of motion. There was minor to moderate hyperkeratosis of the scales overlying the anterior tarsometatarsus on the left hind limb. Numerous scales on digits 2, 3 and 4 on the right hind limb were in an elevated position. There was a small (3 mm), focal area of ulceration on the right laterodorsal gnathotheca. The oral cavity examination was within normal limits. Ocular examination was within normal limits. No abnormalities were detected during thoracic or coelomic cavity auscultation.

0.2 mL of blood was collected from the right jugular vein into a lithium heparin tube and an in-house biochemistry panel and basic haematology were performed. The following results were returned:

PCV 52	CA 2.43 mmol/L
TP 49 g/L	PHOS 1.32 mmol/L
AST 252 U/L	ALB 30 g/L
BA < 35 µmol/L	GLOB 20 g/L
CK 220 U/L	K+ 3.7 mmol/L
UA 238 µmol/L	NA+ 157 mmol/L
GLU 21.2 mmol/L	

There are limited published reference intervals for biochemistry values (Ishigame *et al.* 2006) for Australian magpies; however, these results appear unremarkable. A thin blood smear was prepared and stained using a modified Wright's Giemsa stain. No abnormalities were detected on microscopic examination. An estimated white cell count of 8200 was determined.

Ventrodorsal and lateral radiographs were taken. Roughening of the periosteal surfaces of the deltoid crest, external tuberosity and bicipital crest of both humeri were evident. There appeared to be remodelling of the olecranon process of the right ulna and roughening of the articular surfaces of the distal right humerus. Abundant coelomic fat was evident.

Assessment: This adult male Australian magpie was found to be in good general body condition with appropriate plumage. The bird appeared to be very humanized and failed to exhibit behaviours consistent with those expected of a normal free-ranging Australian magpie. The bird was not observed to fly any great distance, although it could not be determined if this was because the bird was unwilling or unable to do so. Minor abnormalities of the scalation of the lower hindlimbs were evident. Radiographic changes to several bones on both wings were observed. The cause of these changes was not evident on clinical examination but may relate to an inappropriate diet as a juvenile bird. Given the behaviour exhibited by the bird and the radiographic changes that were evident, attempted release of this bird back to the wild would not be considered appropriate in accordance with the Code of Practice - Care of Sick, Injured or Orphaned Protected Animals in Queensland.

Yours sincerely,

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