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Parrot Bornavirus 4 Detected in India for the First Time

15 July 2026 ·

SCIENCE & TECH

GS3

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Parrot Bornavirus 4 Detected in India for the First Time

15 July 2026 · 5 min read ·

Source: ujjyari.com — researched, fact-checked & UPSC-mapped

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WHY IN NEWS

In , Indian scientists reported the **first detection and genetic characterisation in India of Parrot Bornavirus 4 (PaBV-4)**, the primary cause of the fatal **Proventricular Dilatation Disease (PDD)** in parrots. The study covered **83 captive psittacine birds**. About **87.5 per cent of dead birds** and about **54.5 per cent of PDD-suspected birds** tested positive for the virus.

A FIRST FOR INDIA

Until this study, PaBV-4 had not been formally identified and genetically characterised in India, even though the disease it causes has been documented in captive parrots around the world. The detection matters for two reasons. First, it confirms that a serious avian pathogen is already circulating in Indian captive-bird populations. Second, the genetic characterisation gives Indian researchers a reference against which future outbreaks can be tracked and compared with strains reported elsewhere.

The high positivity rate among dead birds, about **87.5 per cent**, points to PaBV-4 as a leading cause of mortality in the sampled population, while the roughly **54.5 per cent** positivity among clinically suspected birds shows the virus is present but not the sole factor in every suspected case.

WHAT IS PARROT BORNAVIRUS 4

PaBV-4 is a **single-stranded RNA virus** belonging to the genus **Orthobornavirus**. It infects **psittacines**, the parrot family, which includes parrots, parakeets, macaws, cockatoos and lovebirds. The virus is the principal agent behind **Proventricular Dilatation Disease**, one of the most feared conditions in aviculture because it is progressive and usually fatal.

How the Disease Harms Birds

PDD attacks two systems at once. It damages the **nervous system** and the **digestive system**. A hallmark of the disease is the **dilation of the proventriculus**, a glandular part of the bird's stomach that lies before the gizzard. When the nerves controlling the digestive tract are damaged, the proventriculus stretches and loses function, so infected birds cannot process food properly. The result is progressive weight loss despite a normal or even increased appetite, along with neurological signs such as tremors, weakness and poor coordination.

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THE STUDY

METRIC	FINDING
Birds studied	83 captive psittacine birds
Positivity among dead birds	About 87.5 per cent
Positivity among PDD-suspected birds	About 54.5 per cent
Virus type	Single-stranded RNA virus
Genus	Orthobornavirus
Hosts affected	Psittacines (the parrot family)
Disease caused	Proventricular Dilatation Disease (PDD)

BIOSECURITY AND CONSERVATION CONCERNS

The finding raises concerns that reach beyond individual aviaries. Because PaBV-4 spreads within captive-bird collections, it poses a **biosecurity** (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/biosecurity/>) risk to breeding facilities, zoos and the growing **exotic-pet trade**. Many parrot species are threatened in the wild, and captive breeding is one tool used to conserve them. An **endemic** (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/endemic/>), fatal virus in captive stock undermines that conservation value and could, in the worst case, spill into vulnerable populations.

This is where regulation of the wildlife trade becomes central. The international movement of parrots is governed by the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**, which restricts and monitors trade in listed species. Within India, the keeping and movement of wild animals is regulated under the **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**, and the reporting and registration of certain exotic live species is covered by the **Living Animal Species (Reporting and Registration) Rules**. Together these frameworks are meant to track where exotic birds come from and go, which is precisely the kind of oversight needed to contain a pathogen that travels with traded animals.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR INDIA

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India has a large and expanding market in captive and exotic birds, and enforcement of registration rules is still maturing. The detection of PaBV-4 is a reminder that **invasive and emerging animal diseases** can enter and establish through the pet and captive-breeding trade, with consequences for animal welfare, for the economics of aviculture, and for the conservation of threatened parrot species. It strengthens the case for disease surveillance at points of trade and for stricter compliance with existing registration and biosecurity norms.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 3: Science and technology developments, **biosecurity and emerging or invasive diseases**, conservation of biodiversity, and the regulation of the wildlife and exotic-pet trade.

Prelims pointers:

- **PaBV-4** is a **single-stranded RNA virus** of the genus **Orthobornavirus**.
- It affects **psittacines** (the parrot family) and is the primary cause of **Proventricular Dilatation Disease (PDD)**.
- **PDD** damages the **nervous and digestive systems** and dilates the **proventriculus**, a part of the bird's stomach.
- The study covered **83 captive psittacine birds**; about **87.5 per cent of dead birds** and about **54.5 per cent of suspected birds** tested positive.
- This is the **first detection and genetic characterisation** of PaBV-4 **in India** (July 2026).
- International wildlife trade is regulated under **CITES**; in India under the **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**, and the **Living Animal Species (Reporting and Registration) Rules**.

Mains question: “The first detection of Parrot Bornavirus 4 in India highlights the biosecurity risks of the captive and exotic-pet trade. Examine the challenges of regulating wildlife trade and preventing the spread of emerging animal diseases, and suggest measures to strengthen surveillance.” (15 marks, 250 words)

FACTS CORNER

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Event (July 2026): First detection and genetic characterisation of PaBV-4 in India, across 83 captive psittacine birds.

Positivity: About 87.5 per cent of dead birds and about 54.5 per cent of PDD-suspected birds.

Virus: Single-stranded RNA virus, genus Orthobornavirus; infects psittacines.

Disease: Proventricular Dilatation Disease (PDD), damaging the nervous and digestive systems and dilating the proventriculus.

Regulation: CITES internationally; Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, and Living Animal Species (Reporting and Registration) Rules in India.

Concern: Biosecurity and conservation risk linked to the captive-bird and exotic-pet trade.

Sources: *Down To Earth* (<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/>), *GKToday* (<https://www.gktoday.in/>)

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