

# Sandhill Veterinary Services

Veterinary Care for Game Birds, Poultry and Pigeons



NEWSLETTER – PIGEON CLIENTS

SPRING 2015

## PROPOSED EU MEDICINES LEGISLATION

In September 2014 draft European legislation was put forward as part of a review of the regulation of veterinary medicines and medicated feeds throughout the EU. As UK controls on veterinary medicines and medicated feeds stem from European legislation, a change in Europe will also affect us.

The key proposals in the legislation that may affect pigeon fanciers include:

Restrictions on the use of certain antimicrobials in the veterinary sector (those that are new or critically important for humans)

The preventive use of antibiotics should not be allowed.

The draft legislation as proposed will now go through the European legislative process which may take some time and it may of course be amended in that process.

Not all antibiotics have the same value in treating humans and it is likely that different rules will apply to different classes of drugs. It is likely that the use of Baytril will be more severely restricted than at present. Baytril is one of the few drugs that are useful for treating Salmonellosis in humans and the main danger from its overuse or misuse is that resistant bacteria will develop in the pigeon gut and these bacteria will transfer from the birds to humans in the dust within a loft and from there to other members of the family. In this way human health is put at risk by incorrect use of the drug. In addition Baytril is a 'broad-spectrum' antibiotic so when used it will kill many of the good bacteria in the bird's gut resulting in more wet droppings in many birds that then require additional treatment.



## ADDITIONAL PERMANENT STAFF

Janet Bullock who has worked for the last two years over the summer months, joined us on a permanent basis last October. Like Sandie and Fran, Janet is working part time over the winter months and will work full time during the busy summer season.

## SANDHILL VETERINARY SERVICES

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## SANDHILL VETERINARY SERVICES / BISHOPTON VETERINARY GROUP CO-OPERATION

Sandhill Veterinary Services (SVS) and Bishopton Veterinary Group (BVG) have agreed a programme of co-operation and mutual support relating to game bird, fancy pigeon and commercial poultry work.

This co-operation will see Dan King, a veterinary surgeon at BVG, spending time particularly during the summer months, working at Sandhill Vets. Dan's interest is primarily with game birds but he will also be available to help with pigeon and commercial poultry clients as required.

This programme of co-operation and mutual support is intended to give a greater depth of cover to the clients of each practice, and allow each practice to service extra clients in a sustainable way as demand has increased. It is not in any way a preparation for Richard Byas to retire in the next few years, neither is it a takeover of BVG bird clients by SVS. It has been agreed between both practices that pre-existing clients of both SVS and BVG will continue to use the services of their respective practices but allow them to gain from the greater expertise and efficiencies that will ensue. In addition Bishopton Veterinary Group has an excellent small animal practice with facilities to X-ray or operate on birds if required.

## PIGEON HEALTH UPDATE

December and January are the months when we see clients' birds prior to pairing up. It is also the time, as the breeding season approaches that the birds are coming under stress and signs of respiratory disease and wet droppings may be seen more frequently.

If the birds have showed any signs of respiratory disease then we advise treatment of the birds for Mycoplasmosis. The choice of antibiotic will depend upon whether we judge that the condition is solely due to Mycoplasmosis or whether other organisms are also present.

We have had a number of cases of birds showing signs of wet droppings. This can be due to a variety of causes and more than one condition may be present at any one time in a loft. Both significant levels of coccidia and worms have been detected in samples over the winter months.

In addition microscopic examination of samples obtained by swabbing birds has shown numerous cases were seen with significant levels of motile bacteria present. Treatment of affected birds with re-hydration salts, and where appropriate antibiotics, have been effective in most of the cases of wet droppings.

Routine cultures for Salmonella have not given any positive results over the past three months.

## PRICE LIST 2015 (Correct at 1<sup>st</sup> March 2015)

### Services:

Pigeon swabs per bird	£3.90
Coccidial oocyst / worm egg count & Salmonella culture from faeces	£12.00
Post-mortem	£34.20
Bacterial culture	£8.40

### Disinfectants:

Antec Virkon-S 5kg	£49.15
Bi-oo-cyst 1 litre	£12.60
Biochlor Tablets (200)	£10.55
Orffa pH 10litre	£28.44
Poultry Shield 1litre	£12.23

### Vitamins and Tonics:

Avian Tonic 100ml	£6.30
Vetrelte 200g	£8.60

All prices quoted are inclusive of VAT and subject to alteration without notice. Carriage will be charged extra where applicable including extra for spill proof containers for certain liquids.

## ROUTINE PIGEON SWABS

We continue to get requests for swabs taken by clients themselves and sent through the post to be examined. We believe that examinations need to be made on fresh material because canker (*Trichomonas* parasites) which may be found on the oral swabs survives for only a short period once the swab has been taken. Similarly Spirochaete and other motile bacteria which can affect pigeon performance will only be found on fresh swabs. As a result we do not accept swabs sent through the post as we cannot be sure of useful results.



Taking a throat swab

Culturing swabs that have been sent by post may isolated salmonella bacteria which would be of interest but we prefer to used pooled faeces samples, which can be sent via the post if correctly packaged, for salmonella testing. E.coli isolated from culturing swabs is unlikely to be of significance. E.coli can be found in the intestines of normal healthy birds and many strains of E.coli are 'normal' gut inhabitants and are not known to cause disease. The same is true in other birds such as poultry and game birds and in many mammals. Removing these normal E.coli by antibiotic treatments will upset the balance of the gut bacteria and may allow space for the bad bacteria to grow and result in wet droppings occurring.

When we do use antibiotics in pigeons we try to use a drug that specifically targets the problem bacteria. Where a broad spectrum antibiotic has to be used we advise that antibiotic treatment is followed by a probiotic or preferably by PreBiotic Spectrum® which is specifically designed to encourage growth of the natural good bacteria within the gut.

The routine examination of faeces samples is however beneficial. The faeces are tested for worm eggs, coccidial oocysts and cultured for Salmonella. If samples are received in time we endeavour to have worm egg and coccidial oocyst results available by the end of the working day with the Salmonella culture result being available in 48-72 hours. Faeces pots are available on request from the practice.