

# Sandhill Veterinary Services

Veterinary Care for Game Birds, Commercial Poultry and Pigeons



NEWSLETTER – PIGEON CLIENTS

SPRING 2017

## MAINTAINING A HEALTHY GUT

There can be thousands of different types of bacteria and trillions of each type within a bird's gut in addition to viruses and fungi. The combined sum of all the bacteria, viruses and fungi on a body is known as the Microbiome and within a healthy gut the bacteria, viruses and fungi live in balanced state. The bacteria in the body consist of both 'good' and 'bad' bacteria and it is the mutual competition between the bacteria that in a healthy bird keeps the 'bad' bacteria in check. So, a healthy gut has a natural balance of bacteria, viruses and fungi. Thankfully most bacteria are 'good' bacteria and they are necessary to prevent 'bad' bacteria becoming the dominant bacteria present. Recent work has shown that there may be 7000 different types of bacteria in a chicken's gut and it is likely that there will be a similar number in the gut of a pigeon. Anything that upsets the balance of the gut bacteria is likely to reduce a bird's performance and when the upset becomes more severe it is seen clinically as the bird passing wet droppings.

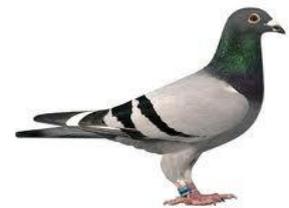
One of the avoidable upsets to a bird's gut bacteria is the inappropriate use of antibiotics. Antibiotics do not distinguish between 'good and 'bad' bacteria – they will kill any bacteria which are sensitive to them. Antibiotics given by mouth will naturally kill off gut bacteria and the greater their killing power (i.e. the less targeted their effect), the more likely they are to kill off large numbers of 'good' bacteria. This allows the other bacteria not killed off by the antibiotic to multiply and take over the space formally taken by the bacteria that have been killed. If the bacteria that multiply up are predominantly 'bad' bacteria, then the gut Microbiome will be unbalanced and the birds are then more likely to pass wet droppings.

When deciding to use antibiotics, we have to make a balanced decision – is the danger of using the drug and possibly upsetting the gut greater than the possible benefits of treating the birds? If birds are ill with a bacterial infection, then the use of a suitable antibiotic is usually the best option but the use of antibiotics in healthy birds can be dangerous. At best the use of antibiotics in healthy birds will have no effect but at worst it will cause health problems in the birds, possibly several weeks into the future, when the connection between treatment and problem may not be apparent.

Finally, it is important to remember that antibiotics only kill bacteria. They have no effect on viruses or parasites and their use in birds with viral or parasitic infections is as likely to create secondary problems as it is to help the birds. When antibiotic treatment has been undertaken, it is appropriate to then help support the Microbiome by treating the birds with a prebiotic to help the 'good' bacteria multiply rapidly and outgrow the 'bad' bacteria. We have available 'Total Prebiotic' for our pigeon clients.



Total Prebiotic



## SANDHILL VETERINARY SERVICES

Richard T. Byas B. Vet. Med.,  
M.R.C.V.S.

14 Long Street, Topcliffe,  
Thirsk. YO7 3RW

Tel: 01845 578710

Fax: 01845 577685

e-mail: [rtb@sandhillvet.co.uk](mailto:rtb@sandhillvet.co.uk)

web: [www.sandhillvet.co.uk](http://www.sandhillvet.co.uk)

### Office hours

Mon – Fri: 8.30am – 5.00pm

Saturday: 9.00am – Noon

## PRICE LIST 2017

(Correct at 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017)

### Services:

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Pigeon swabs per bird  | £4.20  |
| 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 |

### Vitamins and Tonics:

|                   |       |
|-------------------|-------|
| Avian Tonic 100ml | £7.86 |
| Vetrelte 200g     | £8.60 |

All prices quoted are inclusive of VAT and subject to alteration without notice. Carriage will be charged extra where applicable.

## BOOKING APPOINTMENTS

As it is usual for clients to wait at the practice whilst pigeons are examined, it is necessary that clients make an appointment to ensure that the veterinary surgeon will be available to see the birds. Last appointments to examine or post mortem birds are usually about 2 hours before the practice closes.

It is important that we know the total number of birds coming in for examination so that we can effectively schedule the appointments. We will not usually see more birds than have been booked in and if more than one person is bringing in birds this needs to be made clear when the appointment is booked.

## YOUNG BIRD SICKNESS

The classical signs of young bird sickness are young birds that suddenly appear depressed, hold their corn and pass a very watery scour. In severe cases affected birds may die or they may survive but never thrive.

The disease is due primarily to a variety of viruses but some people suspect that bacteria may also be involved in outbreaks of disease. Dehydration, caused by the loss of fluids and electrolytes, is the greatest killer in acute infections. Viruses that have been isolated from affected birds include Circovirus, Adenovirus and Herpesvirus

Treatment of Young Bird Sickness requires more than a simple electrolyte solution; birds need a product that actively re-hydrates them such as Vetrelite®. In addition, a suitable antibiotic may be prescribed by the veterinary surgeon if required to control any bacteria present. Prompt diagnosis and treatment is essential when Young Birds Sickness is suspected.

## PIGEON VETERINARY CALENDAR

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>January:</b>   | Routine monitoring for Coccidia, Worms and Salmonella before pairing up.<br>Treat breeding birds for Mycoplasmosis.  |
| <b>February:</b>  | Routine treatment for Canker.  |
| <b>March:</b>     | Mid-March: vaccinate young birds against Paramyxovirus (and against Pox if it is endemic in the loft)<br>Treat all birds for Mycoplasmosis.<br>Routine monitoring for Coccidia, Worms and Salmonella before old bird racing. |
| <b>April:</b>     | Old bird racing starts.  |
| <b>May:</b>       | Routine monitoring for Coccidia, Worms and Salmonella as required.   |
| <b>June:</b>      | Routine monitoring for Coccidia, Worms and Salmonella before young bird racing.<br>Paramyxovirus vaccination of late youngsters.   |
| <b>July:</b>      | Young bird racing starts.  |
| <b>August:</b>    | Routine monitoring for Coccidia, Worms and Salmonella as required.   |
| <b>September:</b> |  |
| <b>October:</b>   | Routine treatment for Canker.<br>Treat all birds for Mycoplasma.<br>Pox vaccination if required.   |
| <b>November:</b>  | Paramyxovirus vaccination of older birds   |
| <b>December:</b>  | Routine worming of next year's breeding birds.   |

## DISPENSING DRUGS UNDER CASCADE PRINCIPLES

As few medicines are specifically licensed for use in pigeons we are allowed to treat pigeons under what is known as the 'cascade principle'. This allows a drug to be used in a species for which it is not licensed if there is no licensed alternative and its use is deemed necessary by a veterinary surgeon. This means that drugs that have not been specifically licensed for pigeons may be used.

We ask all our pigeon clients to sign a consent form when they register with the practice to confirm that they are aware that we use drugs under the cascade on their birds.

The consent form only needs to be signed once. We then keep it on file for future transactions.

## PRACTICE NEWS

Julie Walker has recently joined the practice to take charge of the laboratory work.

Julie has worked for 16 years at APHA Thirsk in laboratory testing and the post mortem room and she also worked for a year in the parasitology department at APHA Sand Hutton, York. Prior to that she worked as a microbiologist for Hillsdown Turkeys.

Outside of work Julie enjoys spending time with her family, meals out with friends, reading and swimming.



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