

Sandhill Veterinary Services

Veterinary Care for Game Birds, Poultry and Pigeons



NEWSLETTER – PIGEON CLIENTS

SPRING 2014

The Dangers of Overusing Antibiotics

Antibiotics play an important role in controlling bacterial infections in pigeons but their overuse has both potential and actual threats to the bird's health.

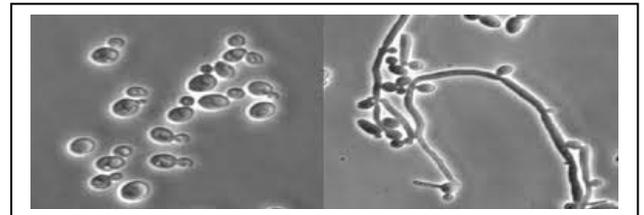
Most people will have heard of bacteria in humans that are resistant to the common antibiotics available. This arises from the overuse of antibiotics and the same can occur in pigeons. The result is that when birds are ill, if the bacteria present have become resistant due to antibiotic overuse, then there are no effective treatments left for the birds.

We still hear of pigeons owners who want to give perfectly healthy birds a routine antibiotic treatment 'to clear them out' and others that will give antibiotics routinely during the racing season. Such practices may seem to have some short-term benefits but each dose of antibiotic leaves behind bacteria that are resistant to the drug – these will become in time the only bacteria present in the birds and the antibiotic then becomes totally ineffective for further use in those birds.

Antibiotics should only be used under veterinary advice with specific antibiotics being used for specific conditions.

The second threat to bird health is the use of broad spectrum antibiotics such as Enrofloxacin (e.g. Baytril ® or Spectron ®). Broad spectrum antibiotics have an important place in fighting disease when used under veterinary guidance but their routine use leads to many of the 'healthy bacteria' in the body being destroyed and their place being taken by less desirable bacteria. This can lead to scours that are hard to control and overall bird performance suffers. We have seen many cases where bird performance has improved as the widespread use of antibiotic has declined.

One of the main predisposing factors in the development of Candidiasis (yeasts in the crop) is the prolonged use of antibiotics which suppresses the normal bacteria that inhibit yeast growth by competing for nutrients. The two factors most likely to result in Candidiasis are dirty, unhygienic conditions and the overuse of antibiotics – it is therefore almost always a disease of bad management and it can be extremely debilitating to pigeons.



Candida as seen under the microscope

Some European vets are advising that pigeons are treated with an antibiotic before vaccination against salmonella. This is not being done on the basis of known infection and following sensitivity testing but appears to be a routine procedure. There is no logical reason for doing this particularly as most of the birds vaccinated will not be infected with Salmonellosis. Dogs and cats are not treated with antibiotics before vaccination and neither are humans. We do not treat poultry or game birds prior to vaccination so other than the vets gaining an extra sale there seems to be no logical explanation for why this is being done. This is a practice that should be avoided.

SANDHILL VETERINARY SERVICES

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NEW PRACTICE WEBSITE

Work is progressing on our new practice website. It will hopefully be easier for clients to navigate and it will have a section devoted to pigeons including a library of past newsletters together with articles on pigeon diseases and their prevention.



Pigeon Veterinary Calendar

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



DISPENSING DRUGS UNDER CASCADE PRINCIPLES

As few medicines are specifically licensed for use in pigeons we are able to treat pigeons under what is known as the 'cascade principles'. 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 tested on pigeons may be used.

We will be asking clients to sign a consent form when we dispense drugs for their birds 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.

Medications sent through the post or on carrier.

There are occasions when we agree to send medications by post or on carrier.

If a client is requesting medication to be sent by these means it is important that we receive notification as early in the day as possible so that it can be authorized by the veterinary surgeon (who may wish to speak to the owner of the birds) and to give time for the parcels to be prepared.

Some products are not suitable for sending through the post and need to be collected from the practice.

The latest cut-off time for us to prepare parcels for the post is 3.30pm weekdays and 10am on Saturdays and for the carrier is 12noon weekdays but these times can only be fulfilled if the veterinary surgeon is available to authorize them. The earlier an order is received the better is the chance of it being fulfilled.

Orders received after these times will normally go on the next day's service.