

# Sandhill Veterinary Services

Game Bird, Poultry and Pigeon care

RICHARD T. BYAS B.Vet. Med., M.R.C.V.S.

## Summer 2012

WELCOME to our summer newsletter in which we review the conditions we have seen this year.

We have detected Salmonella in three flocks which were not showing clinical signs on routine cultures but have also found clinical disease in birds which were not excreting the bacterium in their faeces. (see our lead article)

### Pigeon Booklet

Copies of the booklet are still available from the practice. We are limiting them to one copy per client and they are only available for personal collection.

### Opening Times:

**Monday-Friday**  
8.30am - 5.00pm

**Saturday**  
9.00am - 12.00noon

All other times by  
appointment only

**14 Long Street**  
**Topcliffe**  
**Thirsk**  
**North Yorkshire**  
**YO7 3RW**

**Tel:**

**01845 578710**

**Fax:**

**01845 577685**

**e-mail:**

**rtb@sandhillvet.co.uk**

**Web:**

**www.sandhillvet.co.uk**

## Pigeon Client Newsletter

### SALMONELLA INFECTION IN PIGEONS.

Salmonellosis is caused by a bacterial infection and a number of different strains of Salmonella are capable of causing disease in pigeons.

Although the disease may be particularly severe in young birds and in older birds the bacterium can affect joints which become painful and swollen, the majority of affected birds show no clinical signs. These birds appear healthy and racing ability is not affected. In these cases the bacterium is simply present in the intestines.

It is also very likely that most birds with swollen joints, especially wing joints, are NOT infected with Salmonella but the swelling and pain is caused by damage to ligaments and tendons. Such birds will recover with rest but a weakness remains and they are likely to be damaged again under the stress of racing. In samples of birds submitted for post mortem examination with swollen joints we have not isolated any salmonella from cultures over the past two years.

Laboratory testing is required to confirm a diagnosis of Salmonellosis and positive cases must be reported to DEFRA under the Zoonosis Order. A Zoonosis is a disease that can affect humans and Salmonellosis can be very serious in the young and old. This is why strict personal hygiene is important after handling birds (or any animal) before eating / smoking as seemingly healthy birds can be carrying disease.

We routinely culture for Salmonella when we receive samples for worm egg and coccidial oocyst counts. However this testing may not identify all cases of infection.

### **Salmonella and infertility.**

We had a case earlier in the year where the only reported problem was infertility in a flock of show pigeons. Routine swabs and examination of the birds gave no clue as to the cause of the problem and no salmonella were recovered from swabs taken from the breeding stock.

Samples of 'infertile' eggs were requested - examination of these eggs suggested very early embryonic death (the eggs were not technically infertile) and cultures from the eggs isolated pure growth of Salmonella typhimurium which was confirmed by DEFRA. It is



Salmonella typhimurium culture

known in laying hens that Salmonella typhimurium can affect ovaries and the Salmonella will then be present in the egg, hence the vaccination and regular testing of laying hens producing eggs for human consumption. In this case we believe that the female pigeons' ovaries were infected, the birds themselves were not ill but the Salmonella was being passed into the eggs and causing early death of the embryo. The flock has been treated with a suitable antibiotic and future performance will be monitored.



# Pigeon Coccidiosis

2012 Season Update

**Sandhill Veterinary Services**  
14 Long Street, Topcliffe, Thirsk, N. Yorkshire

Tel: 01845 578710

Fax: 01845 577685

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

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

During the routine testing of faeces samples we have seen a wide variety of coccidiosis levels this year.

Many results have been in the normal range (below 3000 oocysts per gram of faeces) but there have been a significant number above this level and some that have been very high—the highest was over 300,000 oocysts per gram.

Of particular interest have been those results that were above 3000 oocysts per gram of faeces in birds that had been recently treated for coccidiosis. In a number of cases the birds had been treated with a combination product that was supposed to control canker, coccidiosis and respiratory disease. Rarely was canker seen in these birds but raised levels of coccidiosis were not uncommon. In one interesting case the birds had been treated with 'Baycox' only two weeks previously. The source of this 'Baycox' was uncertain but it was certainly not effective leading to speculation that it wasn't Baycox (whatever it said on the bottle), it may have been out of date or it may have been badly stored. Drugs can rapidly lose their effectiveness if not correctly stored - at the practice we store drugs out of sunlight in a temperature controlled room. If drugs were to be left in a vehicle for any period of time it is very likely that heat or cold would render them ineffective.

Coccidiosis is controlled by maintaining good hygiene in the loft. The provision of clean uncontaminated food and water is also important. If birds show signs of diarrhoea, a coccidial oocyst count is advised. Routine faeces analysis before pairing is also recommended. Most disinfectants fail to destroy coccidial oocysts and they can survive for long periods of time in the environment. We advise that lofts are disinfected with Bioocyst® a product that kills coccidial oocysts (in addition to viruses, bacteria and fungi).

The practice stocks a range of disinfectants for pigeon keepers.



## PRICE LIST 2012

### Services:

Pigeon swabs per bird	£ 3.60
Coccidial oocyst / worm egg count & Salmonella culture from droppings	£ 11.40
Post mortem examination	£ 33.60
Bacterial culture	£ 7.80
Culture water sample	£ 7.80

### Vitamins and Tonics:

Bird Tonic 100ml	£ 6.00
Vetrelyte 200g	£ 7.20

All prices quoted are inclusive of VAT

All prices quoted are subject to alteration without notice.

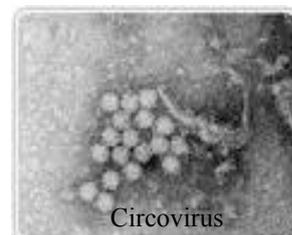
Carriage will be charged where applicable.

## Young Bird Sickness

We have seen numerous cases of young bird sickness this year and in some cases this was accompanied by a reported high death rate in the affected birds.

Affected birds generally show signs of holding corn in their crop, depression and scour but the seriousness of each sign varies in different outbreaks. The disease is caused by a variety of viruses and bacteria and not all are necessarily present in an outbreak of disease. Viruses that have been isolated from affected birds include Circovirus, Adenovirus and Herpesvirus and bacteria that have been isolated include Salmonella and certain strains of E.coli.

Treatment of Young Bird Sickness is based on controlling the bacteria with antibiotics and supporting the birds with re-hydration products, tonics and vitamins as they fight the viral infections.



Circovirus