

Maximizing Youngster Health, Growth and Vigor In Fancy Pigeons

Ockert Botha (BVSc)

Pigeon Veterinarian

Introduction

Breeding and raising healthy youngsters ensure the future and determine the success of the following season. To enable a Fancy pigeon breeder to achieve ongoing success at shows, the health, growth, and vigor of the next generation of show birds need to be secured. The success of the next show season depends on the breeding and raising robust youngsters with perfect plumage. In the previous article, I discussed the importance of breeding from healthy stock and raising healthy babies to ensure the next successful season. However, ensuring these healthy babies grow up to be healthy youngsters and healthy adult birds is just as important.

Understanding disease transmission from breeding birds to babies

Pigeons are notorious sub-clinical carriers of a multitude of different disease-causing organisms. Over the years, they have adapted to these diseases and often harbor these disease-causing organisms without showing clinical symptoms. The immune system of pigeons is responsible for constantly fighting these sub-clinical disease-causing organisms. The fact that breeding pigeons physically feed their babies from hatching and are in extremely close contact with them for the first weeks of life predisposes the babies to be infected with these sub-clinical infections by the disease-carrying breeding birds. It is clear from the above that it is mandatory to try to reduce the sub-clinical carrier diseases in breeding pigeons to a minimum. Breeding birds need to have an optimal immunity against disease-causing organisms (especially viral diseases) to enable them to transmit the maximal immunity to their babies. Pigeons do not transmit immunity to babies via the egg or healthy crop milk. Breeding birds must be correctly vaccinated and treated to ensure optimal immunity transmission and, as such, prevention of early disease-causing and especially immune suppressive disease organisms such as Circo Virus, Trichomonas, Coccidiosis, and Worm infestations, amongst others. Scientifically based pre-breeding season health and selective treatment programs such as the Aviomed programs will ensure the above.

Understanding the role of the immune system in the prevention of diseases in babies

The immunity transferred to babies via the egg and crop milk from breeders starts to wane at 14 days of age and all but disappears at around 28 days. Thus, babies must start developing a healthy immune response to disease from early on in their lives. It is, however, also critical that babies' immune system is not overrun and destroyed by excessive pathogen challenges before they can develop a protective immunity. Stress caused by overcrowding, excessive competition from older birds, and poor hygiene, housing, and husbandry will have a negative impact on the immune system of babies.

The growth of certain molds on grain will produce Mycotoxins that cannot be detected without very specialized tests. One of these Mycotoxins is called Aflatoxin and is well known to cause severe immune suppression in poultry and pigeons.

Optimal nutrition, supplementation, and husbandry will, however, ensure a strong immunity to develop and prevent early crippling diseases from developing.

Understanding the need for separate weaning and youngster lofts

In light of the above, it is clear that the period directly after weaning babies is the critical period when babies' immune systems are at their most precarious. It is also the period where gradual exposure to pathogens needs to be affected. To place recently weaned babies into a youngster loft where they have to compete with much stronger, resilient, and immune-competent siblings is a recipe for disaster. A specific treatment to reduce parasitic diseases must be done before these babies are placed into the youngster loft to reduce transmission of such to other young birds that also have not had the time to develop protective immunity. Effecting the booster vaccine against PPMV1 and reducing the exposure of these already immune-depleted babies to the Circovirus and other immune suppressant viruses is critical before babies are to compete in the youngster loft. Specific Nutraceutical immune and growth support received in the breeding loft must be continued and enhanced. Lastly, the concept of first in, first out placement in the weaning loft needs to adhere to ensure a homogenous age and immune status of the babies in the weaning loft. Effective management of the weaning loft requires individual treatment of babies via vaccinations, spot-on, and tablet administration. Careful record-keeping and color coding rings will enable Fanciers to follow the program.

The maintenance and maximizing of the immune system in squeakers:

The fragile and developing immune system of squeakers can be maintained and supported by the judicious use of Supplements that contain scientifically substantiated vitamins, minerals, trace elements, and nutraceuticals specifically formulated for pigeons. AvioMed is the world leader in combining effective evidence-based medical products with unique world-first supplements. During the period in the weaning loft, daily administration of AvioRotaban is the mainstay of the health of squeakers.



Advantages

The ultra broad-spectrum formulation of AvioRotaban ensures that all the common aspects of immune depletion are prevented, and that the immune system is optimally stimulated. AvioRotaban contains science-based levels of - Liquorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) extract, Grapefruit seed extract,

Cranberry extract, Apple cider vinegar powder, Colostrum, Casein, Pre-biotics (MOS + FOS), Pro-biotics, Beta 1/3D Glucan as well as Mycotoxin binders.

Adding AvioFeather and Immune Oil to the program supports the development and growth of perfect plumage. At the same time, AvioBludform supplies High Bio-available Iodine and trace elements to support squeakers' metabolism and general vigor.



Advantages:

This economical but extremely well-formulated oil, made specifically for pigeons and birds, will ensure shiny and healthy plumage in your pigeons when used regularly. It contains a combination of 6 different oils known to be beneficial to pigeons. Feather & Immune Oil has been specifically fortified with high levels of Omega 3 oils that are combined with high levels of special ultra-pure cold-extracted garlic oil. The combination of garlic and Omega 3 has excellent immune stimulant properties. It is also fortified with very high levels of Vitamin E that stimulates fertility, and acts as a potent antioxidant.

The effective and safe prevention and treatment of diseases in squeakers:

Make sure to vaccinate all breeding birds with the PPMV1 vaccine 8 weeks before coupling and follow the AvioMed pre and breeding program before and during the breeding season. Vaccinate babies at 14 days with a reputable inactivated PPMV1 vaccine that preferably includes the new Pakistani strain of PPMV1.

Wean babies into a designated squeaker loft at 28 days of age. Upon the day of weaning, vaccinate the weanlings with a booster PPMV1 vaccine and a dose of an **AvioCoxiworm** tablet.



Advantages:

This product is a world breakthrough and is the first of its kind to be specifically developed for pigeons. So far, there is no equivalent available for pigeons worldwide. It combines three of the safest and most effective actives available. (Pyrantel Pamoate, Praziquantel and Toltrazuril) for the unique combined treatment of Coccidiosis and worms in pigeons. Pyrantel and Praziquantel are the two safest and most effective actives against the three most common pigeon worms (Roundworm, Hairworm, and Tapeworm). Toltrazuril, likewise, is the most effective and safe treatment against Coccidiosis. It also supplies a three-week residual protection against re-infection with Coccidia by binding to the cells in the intestine. This product is completely safe and does not cause any burning of feathers, so it is ideal for weaning youngsters. Coxiworm tablets are mild on the pigeon's system and will not cause vomiting or a loss of racing performance. Simply dosing one small tablet will eradicate all worms and even the most resistant Coccidia.

The day after weaning, dose each squaker with **Aviotrich**, the unique coated Aviotrich tablet that is the preferred safe, effective treatment against Trichomoniasis. At the same time, apply the breakthrough world-first safe and effective combination spot **AvioEktoBan** on for pigeons at the back of the neck. A single application will protect pigeons against all lice, mites, and even pigeon flies for at least six weeks.



Advantages:

This extremely safe and easy-to-dose small-coated tablet has been specifically formulated to dissolve slowly only once it reaches the pigeon's stomach. This unique coating formulation and extra slow dissolution reduces the incidence of vomiting. AvioTrich contains metronidazole, one of the safest

and most effective products for treating and preventing Trichomoniasis. It has the added effect of stimulating the racing performance if given one day before basketing.



Advantages:

For the treatment of external parasites, including pigeon fly mites and lice. Fast-acting spot-on formulation with extended residual action. The only pigeon-specific spot-on formulation to contain Fipronil and Imidacloprid.

On day 11 in the weaning loft, pigeons are dosed with **AvioEktoEndo tablet** to ensure the life cycle of any worm infestations, especially Hairworm (Cappilaria).



Advantages:

This product is a world breakthrough and is the first of its kind to be specifically developed for pigeons. Currently, there is no equivalent available for pigeons worldwide. It combines two of the safest and most effective products available (Ivermectin and Praziquantel) to treat worms in pigeons. Ivermectin is the most effective treatment for resistant Hairworm infestation and one of the few products that is effective against Lungworm and nasal mites. Ivermectin has the added benefit of controlling blood-sucking lice like red mites. Praziquantel is well known to be the safest and, by far, the most effective product for treating Tapeworm in pigeons. Ekto/ Endo+ contains 50% more Praziquantel than other pigeon products. Simply dosing one small tablet will eradicate all worms and most ectoparasites. Ekto/ Endo+ tablets are mild on the pigeon system and will not cause excessive vomiting.

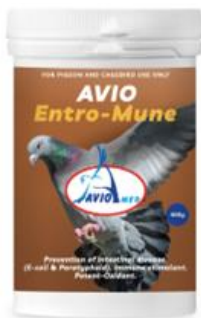
During the last 3 days in the weaning lofts, pigeons are dosed with **AvioTreasure tablets** to minimize the diseases that squeakers will transmit to the youngster loft and to aid the immune system of being overrun during the stress of their new surroundings in the youngster loft.



The maintenance and maximizing of the immune system in youngsters:

Once the critical weaning period has been supported, the squeakers are transferred to the youngster's loft. The support and maintenance of the immune system are still paramount, but so are optimal growth and feathering of the potential show pigeons.

Twice weekly administration of **AvioEntromune** ensures that harmful Mycotoxins and other toxins are not cumulatively absorbed. Pre and probiotics maximally stimulate gastrointestinal health and suppress pathogenic bacteria. The addition of ultra-pure Beta-glucan maximally stimulates the immune system. **Aviogel** additionally supplies Apple Cider's advantages in a stabilized powdered Vinegar formulation. In addition to the synergistic action of Grapefruit seed extract, Candida infection is significantly reduced.



Entromune is the ultimate weapon in preventing Young Bird disease, Salmonella, E. coli, and Mycotoxins in pigeons. No single pigeon product in the world currently contains the fantastic blend of natural elements that Entromune contains. It combines six natural elements to make it the most effective immune stimulant, intestinal protector, and antioxidant available today. Ultra-pure Beta-

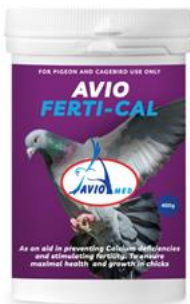
glucan combined with Grape seed extract and garlic combine synergistically as the ultimate immune stimulant. Pro-biotics specifically blended for avian use combined with Pre-biotics (FOS & MOS) ensure the maximal growth of good bacteria in pigeons' intestines, thereby reducing the risk of Salmonella and E. coli. Adding toxin-binding natural salts reduces the absorption of mycotoxins and heavy metal poisoning often found in pigeon food and polluted water.



Advantages:

AvioGel is a unique powder used to ensure maximum attachment of any powder or liquids to pigeon food. This amazing powder turns into a highly digestible gel when mixed with water. The gel attaches well to grain and dries to form a permanent film around the grain, ensuring that none of the added products are lost. It is fortified with grapefruit seed and apple cider vinegar extracts to inhibit Candida and bad bacteria and acts as a potent antioxidant.

The addition of **AvioFertical** supplementation further supports optimal growth while **AvioBludform** supplies High Bio-available Iodine and trace elements to support the metabolism and general vigor of youngsters.



Advantages:

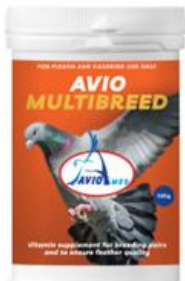
Fertical is the most complete and well researched supplement ever developed for supplementing during the breeding season. It is the first supplement to support fertility, egg production, and optimal growth and health of babies. In keeping with the latest avian research regarding Calcium metabolism, it contains three of the most bio-active Calcium salts with all the co-factors needed to ensure optimal Calcium absorption. This ensures the perfect eggshell quality and growth of babies. The unique addition of Co-Enzyme Q10 selected herbs and high levels of Vitamin E and Beta Carotene stimulate fertility in older cocks and hens, ensuring that even older stock birds will breed and raise vigorous and healthy babies. The inclusion of the highest quality Colostrum and Whey powder imported from New Zealand ensures optimal immunity for youngsters. A first-ever, truly unique, three-in-one breeding supplement!



Advantages:

Bludform contains a unique blend of Vitamins, Minerals, Trace elements, and Iodine that have been carefully selected to maximize the stimulation of healthy red blood cells and stimulate the pigeon's metabolism. Using Bludform during the breeding season will stimulate the bird's thyroid glands and ensure optimal breeding results. Bludform differs from other European formulations in that it contains far higher levels of Vitamin B12 and that only the purest source of non-toxic Iodine AAC salts is used during manufacture.

AvioMultibreed, with its unique formulation including Amino acids and lesser-known elements such as Thiocctic acid and MSM, further supplies all the needed elements to ensure optimal growth and feathering.



Advantages:

Multibreed has been specifically formulated to enhance the breeding performance of stock pigeons. The unique formulation also stimulates growth and perfect feathering in babies. Multibreed contains very high levels of vitamins with the addition of Thiocctic acid, a potent immune stimulant and liver support vitamin. With the addition of high levels of Vitamin E, Biotin, Methionine, Lysine, Zinc, and even MSM, this is one of the most complete and well-formulated products to use routinely during the breeding and molting season.

The safe and effective prevention and treatment of diseases in youngsters:

Once the squeakers have undergone their two-week isolation and treatment program in the weaning loft, they are transferred to the youngster loft, where they will stay for approximately 6 months until they are incorporated into the adult show loft. They must spend the first few months of their lives gradually developing protective immunity to all the diseases they will be exposed to in the adult loft.

Any new babies or adult birds obtained from other fanciers must enter an isolation/hospital loft and be treated for the squeakers.

During their time in the youngster loft, the pigeons go onto a specific youngster treatment program that ensures optimal health by reducing pathogen challenges. This will allow the pigeon's immune system to gradually develop protective immunity and not succumb to the diseases caused by these pathogens. Treatment is kept to a minimum and sometimes done for shorter periods than when clinical disease treatment is needed. As such, pigeons only receive treatments every 4 weeks. This means treatments will only be done in weeks 2, 6, 10, 14, 18, and 22. During the other weeks, they will only receive their routine supplement program as set out in the program.

Treatment against Coccidia is done by adding **AvioCoxiworm** – the broad-spectrum antibiotic combination of Sulfadimethoxine and high-dose Trimethoprim to the drinking water. This treatment also effectively reduces E coli, Salmonella, and other bad gut bacteria.



Advantages:

AvioCox is a true broad-spectrum antimicrobial. It combines Suphadimethoxine, the safest and most effective Sulphonamide, with the purest and most potent water-soluble high-dose Trimethoprim. Suphadimethoxine is a newer, safer, and more effective Sulphas ideal for treating and preventing Coccidiosis. At the high dose inclusion of Trimethoprim found in this product, it has been proven to be very effective against Salmonella (Paratyphoid) and E. coli. The combination of Trimethoprim and Sulphas is well known to act synergistically to increase its spectrum against bacteria. AvioCox is thus also highly suitable for treating other bacteria, especially those found in the Intestinal tract. AvioCox is the ideal product for treating "Young Bird Disease."

Salmonella (Paratyphoid) infections are extremely prevalent in Fancy pigeons and can cause permanent infertility and other debilitating diseases in pigeons. A single treatment of **TyphoidCure** – the proven Polybiotic combination is done for 3 days. This follows on from the **AvioCox** treatment and, as such, further reduces the potential danger of this devastating infection.



Advantages:

This extremely effective combination of three different antibiotics acts synergistically to be highly effective against Salmonella (Paratyphoid) and E coli. Extended treatment for 10 days has been proven to cure most cases of Paratyphoid carriers and has no side effects. This treatment is far safer than the Enrofloxacin high dose extended treatment. The day after the TyphoidCure treatment, youngsters should be vaccinated with a reputable inactivated Paratyphoid vaccine.

While handling the youngsters, they are also dosed with AvioTrich, the novel coated high dose Metronidazole tablet against Trichomoniasis. Aviozole - the ultra-pure, highly soluble Ronidazole powder is added to the drinking water in week 18 of the program as a second Trichomonas treatment.



Advantages:

Ronidazole is the safest and one of the most effective products available for treating and preventing Trichomoniasis. **AvioZole** contains ultra-pure, highly potent prime-grade Ronidazole in a special, easy-to-dissolve powder form. **Aviozole** is available in a 10% or a 25% formulation. The 25% formulation is ideal for the fancier who has many pigeons as it is more cost-effective.

Although respiratory diseases caused by Chlamydophila (Ornithosis) and Mycoplasma (Mycoplasmosis) or the combination of Ornithosis are less prevalent in fancy pigeons, they can still cause severe clinical disease, and both are transmitted via the egg. So, once a carrier status is affected, it becomes extremely difficult to eliminate many of these. A three-day treatment with the extremely efficient Doxycycline and Spiramycin combination – **AvioSpiradox**- will again ensure the pathogenic onslaught reduction and the carrier status in Youngsters.



Advantages:

For the treatment of Ornithosis and Mycoplasmosis, spiradox is currently by far the safest and most effective treatment for Ornithosis (combined infection by Ornithosis and Mycoplasmosis). The

combination of antibiotics ensures that both organisms are treated optimally. The highest grade of active ingredients ensures solubility and acceptance by pigeons and reaches maximal therapeutic levels in the bloodstream and organs such as the lungs and sinuses. Spiramycin is a new generation Mycoplasma treatment that far surpasses Tylocin in efficacy and does not cause the drying of feathers seen with Tylan treatment.

Conclusion

Pigeon fanciers should not accept a high Squeaker and Youngster mortality or the breeding of pigeons of inferior health, growth, and vigor. By taking the time, spending the effort, and being prepared to spend more funds and thereby investing in the future, a marked improvement in show results and pigeon sales will be ensured. If there is a high mortality rate in Squeakers or Youngsters, the fancier should try to ascertain the reason for this and rectify it. Following a well-researched pigeon Pre-Breeding, Breeding, and Youngster program will ensure a high Squeaker percentage and the raising of vibrant and healthy babies.

To obtain an e-mail with the easy-to-understand Pre-Breeding, Breeding, Youngster, and Show season programs free of charge, e-mail the words "Send Show pigeon Health programs" to Foy's Pet Supplies at info@foypetsupplies.com fanciers may also visit the website www.aviomed.co.za and look under programs and then download the Show pigeon health programs.

This is the final article in a series of articles regarding the optimal management, breeding, and showing of Fancy pigeons. The final goal is to ensure optimal fertility, health, survival, and growth and the best plumage and body score for your shows.