

# Easy Racing Pigeon Health

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By Ken Easley - 2016

I like the natural approach at the home loft to build disease resistant pigeons but pigeons living in captivity need a little help to give them access to what they cannot get in a cage. These recommendations will get them all healthy and then you must keep a vigilant eye thereafter to maintain it.

Any natural products are welcomed. You can't expect to treat pigeons like prisoners of war and see them fly to their potential. They must have fresh clean air. They need to feel secure and unafraid. This requires a calm approach. You don't grab breeding pigeons while they have babies or eggs. Watch them so they are comfortable around you but don't handle breeders once paired for best results. They will begin to trust you and the loft will be filled with happy pigeons. Happy pigeons coo and strut around. In a healthy & happy loft the cocks will be seen lifting their wings in the air as they strut around. This is a sure sign of optimum health.

Healthy race team pigeons will go to the floor and flap their wings when you enter the loft because they feel excited and want to fly. Pigeons that are afraid of you will grunt when you enter the loft to warn everyone that danger is here. Don't get mad at the birds, you did it.

For optimum health they must have great feed. Good feed is not good enough for top athletes. It has to have a wide variety of seed types that will give them a full range of vitamins, protein, Carbs, fat and health. Grit is also very important. (yes I know a guy can win racing using chicken scratch and free lofting)

I seriously doubt any grit can provide what is found by the pigeons picking at the ground all day so it is very important that the grit be of the highest quality. I found some kind of blue grit ordered for small cage birds for a guy in the club. The guy didn't pick it up so I bought it. The birds love it and I have been using more. It has all kinds of minerals, iodine, calcium, oyster shell, etc. It is the first grit I believe is better than red cross health grit. I know many of the grits sold attract the pigeons but be careful because it may be full of salt which pigeons cannot resist. They don't need lots of salt. They need iodine.

Pigeons eating peas need calcium to neutralize the toxins that peas have. Many seed eating birds including pigeons are known to fly long distances to search for calcium rich sources to help in digestion of seeds with different types of toxins. Rape seed for instance

has a small amount of poison. For this reason they should not be given more than 5% rape in any mix.

Clean water is very important. When I say I give good clean water, I mean good clean water. My water is filtered at the well which is 450 feet deep. At that depth the rock filters it as well. It has no chlorine or chemicals. To this I add one of the highest concentrations of natural probiotics I could get my hands on. I alternate between this and my own home brew of perfect probiotics mixed with another powder mix of my own. I shake it up in the perfect water powder container until it is mixed well. Then measure out the same amount per gallon. I only give this twice a week, before and after training for flyers. For breeders I give it Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.

I feed spinach and other greens as well.

I give a bath every Sunday. If I see a sick pigeon I remove it. I never give baths if I see a sick pigeon. Baths spread sickness quickly.

I give PMV to my youngsters at 28 days old. I never vaccinate breeders. In the spring time we see a runny nose or watery eye in the young birds sometimes. First thing is separate it immediately and treat it. You may need to put it on doxycycline for rattles.

I also keep ornithosis medication on hand if that is the case. I have learned to keep the "one drop one time" medication as well. Amazing stuff and it does what it claims. One drop one time and their cured of eye cold. You drop it in their while holding them on their side with head held steady. Let that drop roll around in the eye. Hold them so it can't fall out. Let it marinate for a minute before you release them. When you see it bubbling up then you are done.

I use moxydectin for worming once a year. I worm when I am done breeding. I don't like to worm before breeding because it knocks the birds down. I worm the whole lot one time a year only. I mark the syringe with a sharpie to show the serving for one gallon of water. I use a blender. I mix it in a little cup first then add it to a gallon for administration. I leave it for two days. 24 hours is enough but some birds won't drink bad tasting water. The toughest birds will drink the second day. Don't leave it any longer. It is hard on kidneys etc.

Before breeding season I give my birds chicken laying pellets for a week. It helps them build strong eggs. It has everything needed for egg laying. I don't use it more than a week because it will cause them to lay too much if you leave them on chicken laying pellets for more than three weeks. If a hen is having issues the pellets will straighten them out if they are capable of laying. In my experience it has something in it that makes them want to lay.

During the molt I give iodine in the water. I picked up a large quantity with a good friend to mix up enough for the next 25 years. I add 10 drops to a gallon of water during the molt. It makes them molt quicker I noticed.

I keep a little 5 n 1 on hand to give my young bird team before racing starts. I give it for three days just to make sure everything is ship shape.

Don't forget to turn your loft facing south for plenty of sun and block off any drafts from where the birds perch at night. Fresh air is good for both pigeons and fancier. If the loft smells fresh, your good to go. If it smells like dust and pigeon droppings you're heading for a disaster.

So, as much as I would like to be all natural, these are the things I have found will help maintain the healthiest pigeons. I probably forgot something but these are the main things.