

Ornithosis complex in Pigeons

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When we are talking about Ornithosis Complex in pigeons, we are talking about a number of disorders that we need to differentiate into three separate parts.

Part One is the Upper respiratory such as eyes, nose, throat and sinuses.

Part Two is the Middle respiratory part such as trachea, syrinx (the organ that forms the sound in a bird's 'throat', however it is about 10 inches inside the body at the bifurcation of the trachea into the two main bronchi) and the bronchi.

Part Three is the deep respiratory trachea such as the lungs and air sacks. By far, most problems we see are in the upper respiratory part. Please remember pigeons are not very ill, although sometimes obviously they can be. In general it is my opinion, this is the most important cause of loss of condition

simply as a result of the draught (cold air stream) caused by the ventilation system. After the ventilation was switched off, the pigeons visibly recovered, throwing down feathers again and becoming shiny and smooth around the ears and in the neck.

Many fanciers and vets are thinking that by means of laboratory research (checks) one can conclude that the pigeons have ornithosis (complex). However, this is a costly misunderstanding!! Ornithosis complex is among other things, caused by Herpes-1 virus, Mycoplasma, Chlamydia and a whole lot of common bacteria like E-Coli (yes indeed), Streptococcus, Staphylococcus etc.

This whole disorder can be complicated by Trichomoniasis (canker), however canker is a disease on it's own.

with your finger on the upper beak once opening.

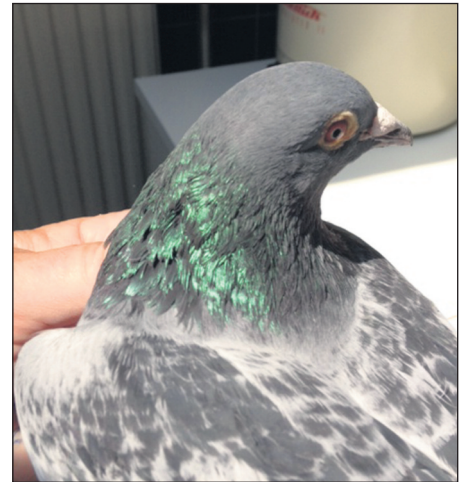
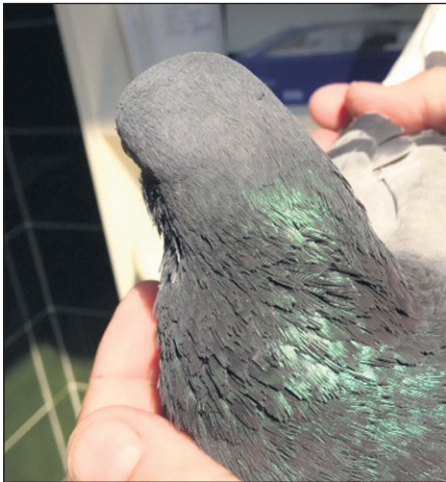
Pigeons that have problems with their upper respiratory system can also not be motivated well. They are picked on and become de-motivated in the baskets, especially after two nights of basketing. In the loft they scratch their heads, wipe their eyes over the wings, sneeze, gasp, etc etc. To put things clear, in my opinion the diagnosis is as clear as day from night.

Hens have less problems, they do not pick nor fight, are more quiet and use up much less energy.

The treatment besides the improvements to the loft consist of a short (yes short) treatment with suitable antibiotics. The long treatment of three weeks with a long course against Chlamydia for example is in my opinion completely crazy!

I never ever have seen miracles in this way of treating. On the contrary nevertheless it is prescribed by many universities, so you see how far the theory has fallen apart from the daily practice in a period of around 20 years.

When you realize that our pigeons sit together with thousands in baskets in the



and form in a racing pigeon.

This disorder mainly takes place in the racing season and starts to appear after three – four races, especially when there is a cold and wet pre-season and postponed releases in April.

We see problems with the upper respiratory problems in many many lofts.

The disorder is much more common in cocks than in hens and also more so in yearlings than in old birds. This is because in older birds there has been "more selection".

The loft plays an important role in all this. A good loft should not have any draughts, this means no cold air should fall downwards because the roof is laying "loose" on the front and back wall and because the ceiling is too far open. Moreover a loft can be good under certain weather conditions while under other conditions it may be not good!

As a rule open aviaries are very good, because there is no draught if you understand what I mean.

Some 15-20 years ago I used to visit many top lofts in Germany and I drove tens of thousand of miles. On many occasions I advised my clients to turn off their often very expensive ventilation systems. This was because the pigeons were showing red throats and off-standing feathers around their ears,

The laboratory reports, results, of what? Does not mean anything to me. You can simply see for yourself if your pigeons have upper respiratory problems or not. What does a lab result like Chlamydia mean to me when the pigeons look great and perform well. There have been studies which proved that more than 60% of the pigeons had antibodies against Chlamydia, moreover, in many pigeons in super condition one can trace many potentially illness-causing agents. They live in a kind of equilibrium (balance) with the concerning pigeon.

Only if these balances are disturbed, we see the 'signs' of the disease coming up like coming home tired and skinny dry feathers, no more down feather fall, no more willingness to bath. Not enough white powder on the surface of the bath water. Furthermore of course, less training appetite, looking without expression, blue breast muscle and off standing feathers around the ears, rough necks, red throats, and slime in the throat. All of these are the signs that mark problems with the upper respiratory tract. Also the slot in the upper beak should be open a little.

I have discussed this over many years with great champions. And the conclusion was the slot should open after a little pressure

transporters you can also understand that there will be a tremendous exchange of disease-causing agents e.g. ornithosis, but also many other ones. Whether the pigeons get problems or not after their transport and race, depends on the resistance of the concerning pigeons, the condition on basketing and the infection pressure in the basket. It is all about balances between sick making agents and the pigeon's own resistance.

For that reason that I am seldom 'surprised' by lab results. In pigeons they do not mean a lot to me. They seldom give me important additional information of what I already know!

Remember upper respiratory ornithosis is hardly ever a problem when you do not race pigeons. During racing seasons it is the most important form and condition lowering factor in our race horses of the sky.

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