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**Pigeons and their  
Economical Health Care**

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Cover photo:  
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ISBN 9781089848509

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# Preface

The world around us has changed dramatically in the last few decades, and this is no less true of pigeon breeding. Not so long ago, a pigeon fancier kept a little potassium permanganate at home, a little garlic extract, and a little paraffin, and this was more or less adequate to preserve the health of his flock. Those days are over. In the last few years, a number of viruses and bacteria have appeared in our environment which pigeons had previously not encountered. These new types of pathogens have caught the birds' immune system unprepared, causing high rates of illness and death in certain flocks, in wider regions, and in whole countries.

These new pathogens, or the more resistant variants of old ones, have appeared in all significant pigeon breeding areas. Thanks to easier passage over national borders, imports of birds for breeding, international races and shows, and the buying and selling of birds, newer and newer pathogens have appeared, spreading around the pigeon stocks of different countries, generating endless problems, damage, work and expenses for fanciers. A good example of this is the spread of circovirus, which has raised its ugly head in some countries' pigeon stocks; if news and hands-on evidence are to be believed, it is spreading among pigeons on a continuous basis. The circovirus attacks and damages the bird's immune system, its defence mechanism (in a similar fashion to HIV in humans), as a result of which the pigeon becomes defenceless against attack from all the other pathogens.

This book not only strives to present the most important pigeon diseases, including the newest ones, but also tries to assist in protecting the health of the flock in the most economical and successful, and not least most environmentally friendly way possible. Countless new medicines and supplements have appeared on the market in recent years, and continue to appear almost every week. These products are effective against certain ailments, but treatment is not the first step in keeping pigeon

flocks healthy. On the contrary, treatment with medicines is a necessary evil (an evil because the majority of active ingredients have adverse side-effects – if nothing else, then their effect on your wallet) that we must always take great care with, as overuse of medication – as we will discuss in greater detail later – puts great strain not only on the fancier's financial resources, but on the environment, and, most of all, on the health of the pigeon itself.

**The first section of the book** deals with the prevention of epidemics, pigeon care hygiene, and maintaining the level of the pigeon's immune state. It describes the methods and techniques that – after a financial investment that will soon be recouped – are for the most part enough to guarantee the health of our pigeons, and thereby their highest level of performance.

**The second section of the book** deals with the general characteristics of medicines and supplements, and with the associated knowledge that is a necessary part of modern pigeon breeding. A significant proportion of preparations can be acquired and used without a prescription, so we should be clear about the objective and theoretical basis of each form of treatment, that is, about the way in which a preparation has its effect within the bird's body. We should know how to treat our flock with these over-the-counter (OTC) preparations, and we should also know how NOT to treat it. We must be aware of why we do what we do, we must know the principles and how they relate to practice, for this is how we can make progress, and think in terms of our flock.

**In the third section,** we discuss the most important contagious and non-contagious diseases in pigeons. We deal with their causes, symptoms, prevention and treatment. We consider in turn the active ingredients and methods which are currently considered to be the most effective in the many countries across the world with pigeon-fancying traditions.

**The fourth section** comprises a description of the active ingredients of medications that have been available for a longer

time and those that have been developed more recently, and a guide to their use.

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This guide is not a university textbook. It contains a variety of important information, but is no substitute for knowledge to be gained at university veterinary courses. In other words, we should regard the maintenance of the health of our flock as a task that we share with our chosen veterinary surgeon; we should ask for their collaboration, accept their advice, and follow their recommendations regarding medicines. **Economical, effective and safe treatment always begins with a precise diagnosis**, which in most instances requires veterinary expertise. Many years of experience go to show that, in the vast majority of instances, “diagnoses” produced without professional veterinary participation, and medicines acquired second-hand or at random, do much more damage to the pigeon flock than good – damage that is often irreparable.

Let there be no misunderstanding: I do not wish to underestimate the undoubted expertise of experienced pigeon fanciers, from whom, as a veterinary surgeon, I have learned a huge amount, and I know the same to be true of many of my colleagues. It appears that over the long term it is the close cooperation between fanciers and veterinary surgeons that produces the best and most successful pigeon flocks, whether we take national or international examples as our guide.

Last, but not least, I honestly hope that my fellow veterinarians active in pigeon health will find some fresh and useful information in this book.

\*

As this book is available in a number of different languages and countries, we have, in addition to clarity of exposition, endeavoured to use those (specialist) terms that are most commonly used worldwide. As these are not always the same as those used in a particular locality, we appreciate the reader’s patience and understanding in this.

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## **Warning!**

The drugs that appear in the book are generally not to be given to meat pigeons condemned for human consumption, or only under strict conditions! Most drugs can only be administered to these animals with a veterinary prescription and observing the withdrawal period as directed by the veterinary surgeon.

Dr. Zsolt Talabér

# **I. Maintaining good health without recourse to medicines**

We are well aware that nowadays the healthcare of pigeon flocks is inconceivable without the use of medicines – whether for scheduled preventive use or for healing treatment on a case-by-case basis. Yet we continuously strive to keep the use of medicines to a minimum. This is not only in our own interest, but equally that of the pigeons, as well as their local and more general environment.

If we do not have to spend a lot on medicines, this means that our flock is healthy, but this does not happen of its own accord. The utilization of what we discuss here in the first section of the book is absolutely necessary for us **to manage the health of the flock and prevent the majority of diseases**, and, if it does prove inevitable, to provide treatment in the most effective and economic way, and with the least damage to the environment.

We have grouped the issues in this chapter into three sections: