

The New Australian Pigeon Company Pellets

By Dr. Colin Walker B.Sc. B.V.Sc. M.A.C.V.S (avian health)

Many fanciers will now be familiar with the new APC Pigeon Pellets that are available. Formulated by Dr. Colin Walker and supplied by the Australian Pigeon Company they have now been available for about 10 months. Two types are available, Racing pellets are a concentrated supplement designed to be added to a grain diet, while Maintenance pellets offer a completed diet and can be offered as the only food.

Why make them?

Most of the grain blends used by pigeon racers have developed as a rather hit and miss affair rather than based on any real science or knowledge of nutrition. Pigeons do not have nutritional wisdom and simply eat the grain that for them tastes good. Most of the grain blends are high in fat and low in many essential nutrients, in particular calcium, vitamin A, vitamin E and the amino acids methionine, choline and tryptophan. This is probably a whole range of vitamin and protein supplements have come into being and can be used with success. These days, 99% of qualified avian vets during their consultations recommend to the owners of pet caged and aviary birds that these birds' diets be based on one of the available pelleted rations. The pelleted rations are like an avian Pal Meatybite and provide a much more balanced and complete base to the diet than any blend of dry grain.

The formulation of the APC pellets

The APC and Dr. Walker were given access to the full nutritional information of some of the best sources in the world. This included recommended daily intakes and the nutritional contents of each grain. From this it was a matter of doing the maths to develop the nutritional contents of the both the Racing and Maintenance pellets.

Use of the pellets

The two types of pellets are made so that fanciers can choose whether they want to feed a grain based diet or not. A diet of 40% peas, 12% wheat, 12% safflower, 12% milo, 12% corn and 12% Racing pellets provides approximately the same level of nutrition as 100% Maintenance pellets. Either feeding method provides a balanced diet. The Racing pellets are more expensive because they contain higher levels of vitamins, minerals and amino acids to compensate for the deficiencies of the grain diet.

Keeping stock birds in condition

No other supplements are required (apart from grit) when the birds are on the APC pellets. Dr. Walkers own breeding birds have been fed virtually nothing else now for over 18 months and the youngsters produced this year are robust strong young race birds. Feeding Maintenance pellets make it easy to provide a complete diet for stock birds.

Some fanciers feed a reduced ration or for example only barley to get weight off their birds prior to pairing. It simply makes no sense to feed a deficient diet just before pairing when the birds need to be at their best. The pellets are formulated to contain 6% fat. Stock birds cannot become fat on this, no matter how much they eat. The answer to keeping stock birds trim all year round is simply to feed Maintenance pellets.

Fanciers will notice that a small amount of powder forms in each bag. This is due to the action of the pellets moving against each other in the bag and is unavoidable. It takes about 3 – 4 days for the birds to get used to the pellets and also for the first 2 – 3 weeks the birds will drink a bit more, which makes the droppings a bit sloppy. These signs pass quickly and are a small inconvenience for the long-term benefits of a complete diet. The pellets do not interfere with the use of medication and are made fresh regularly.