**Products**

Along with selling/buying pigeons, the most money spent in the sport is on by-products. The question is do they work and are they actually necessary to win at the highest level? If you go and look at any website of the main suppliers of these products, you will find a seasonal programme, and a special deal to buy all the products you need to succeed whether it is racing, breeding or moulting. If you look at the product page, they have so many products for sale a lot do not even appear on their own programme. However, one thing you can guarantee is there will be something to put in the water and over the food every single day of the week.

Before I continue I have to hold my hand up and admit when I was younger I fell into the trap of believing all the fancy adverts that say they will increase the performances of the birds by 5, 10 or even 20%. These products are expensive and looking back over the years I used all these products, they were the worst seasons.

We have the BHW weekly and it is full of pages of stuff you can put in the water or over the feed. Web forums, auction sites you name it they are everywhere. My dad raced very well flying on the North route and he barely used anything over the feed or in the water. He mainly used natural products like honey on return, and some garlic in the water but that was it. The birds had to take care of themselves and any weaklings did not survive. His stance was the birds should get all the vitamins and minerals they need from the feed so why give them more in the water. Is too much vitamins and minerals every day negative more than a positive?

Especially over the last 5 years, I have come around to my father’s way of thinking. An example is our system during breeding. I acidify the water and the birds get a balanced feed but that is it. If youngsters do not grow quick enough in the nest then I remove them from the loft. These pigeons will never be good and will only come back to haunt you later on in the season. If you have an adeno outbreak, I assure you these that have already shown weakness will be the first to get sick.

I may have given off the impression that I do not use anything with my pigeons, but this is of course not the case. One thing I do believe in is honey / glucose after a race. This is not directly after a race, as the pigeon’s water intake is high but I give it later on in the evening and the day after each flight.

Grit is something that is underrated but very important. I read on forums about fanciers who say it is of no value, but I disagree with them 100%. It contains calcium and helps the birds digest their food. It helps with the laying process, but in addition I also give a calcium product. Grit is very cheap and I often wonder because you never see it advertised as a “wonder product”, is this the reason some fanciers do not believe in it?

As mentioned, I acidify the water. I make my own product (very cheap) and it does the job. Does it make the birds win? No, but it does create an environment in the drinker and in the gut of the pigeon that diseases like canker do not enjoy.

Apart from annual vaccinations that is pretty much all we do. I have my birds tested by the vet on a regular basis and of course if required we give medication based on the advice.

Does pigeon racing have to be as complicated as some people make out? I do not think so but there are many roads to Rome.