

# Hand Feeding Fancy Pigeons

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I wrote my first article on Hand feeding back in December 1988. Over the past nine years I have probably hand-fed around 400+ baby pigeons. I have continued to try different formulas and methods of feeding. I believe I now have the most simple and efficient method for my breeding program. When I first started to hand feeding, I was using 16% chicken mash crumbles. I burnt up many blenders grinding these crumbles into somewhat of a powder. I would then have to soak this powder for about 10 mins. in very hot water so that the crumbles would break down enough so that I could create a milk-shake consistency that would slide through a syringe. I had to of course let this cool down enough before I could feed the squabs. Start to finish this would take around 1/2 an hour twice a day. Kaytee has created what I feel is the finest quality hand feeding formula for Pigeons. This product was developed for Cockateils but I have been feeding my baby fancy with it for a least 5 years with excellent results. This product is Exact hand feeding formula for cockateils. You mix the amount you need with warm water and feed your babies. Start to finish 5-10 mins. depending on how many babies you are feeding. A 5lb bag costs around \$15.00. I raise about 50 fancy pigeons a year and use 15-20 lbs. Protein content is 21% and I have never had a problem with the babies digesting the formula as they did with the crumbles. I feed them in the morning and top them off at night after the feeders have fed. I use a 60cc syringe with a wide catater tip. This syringe holds about 2 ounces. (I have only been able to locate this type of syringe from my veterinarian.) Open the babies mouth aim the syringe down the throat on the opposite side of the windpipe and fill the crop. Another change I have made is I no longer use a brooder box. I found I was creating an environment that was promoting trash in my squabs. I have a very good team of foster feeders which are mainly racing homers. I leave the baby in the nest usually until they are fully feathered. At about 2 weeks I will move the round of babies into a separate cage. Depending on the weather and the temperature, I use a drop light for added warmth. I will continue to hand feed and usually they are fully weaned and eating on their own by 4 weeks of age. The first round is the hardest to wean. I put an old hen in with them so that they have something to imitate. The babies that are added to the bunch later, learn from the older ones. They will huddle together and stay warm and safe. From there they move to the young bird cage. Even at the height of breeding season I spend no more than a 1/2 hour a day total, hand feeding. I still feel very strongly that there is no substitute, for Pigeon milk. But many times a baby will hatch and the feeders have a hard time getting started feeding it. If I notice they have not started to feed the baby after a few hours, I will give the squab a little sugar water just to perk it up and keep it from dehydrating. This is usually enough to stimulate the baby so that the feeders know something is alive under them. I let both eggs hatch under one pair and after a few days I will move one baby to another pair if I have them available. I keep 18 pair of feeders for about 8 pair of breeders. One last hint that has been successful for me the past few years is give the squeecker 1/2 tablet of Spartrix for canker on the day you band them. This helps a lot in keeping canker under control. There are many successful Fancy Pigeons breeders with many different methods that work. I just wanted to share the one that has worked or me.