

## *Simple Loft Management* *by Bob McGuan*

It has been asked a few times recently about the general care of my birds and how I do things. In this article, I will give the rundown of my loft routine and describe why and how it works for me. This is just how I do things, not the exact answer to how you should do things in your own loft. This works for me and is simple.

First, there is no substitute for a dry loft. Notice I did not say *clean* and dry, just dry. The reason for this is simple and yet often overlooked. I clean my loft two to three times per year. I know of people who scrape their lofts monthly, weekly, even daily. In my opinion, there is such a thing as “too clean”. If the loft is kept too clean the birds are less likely to experience simple colds and other minor diseases. Because of this, they also do not have the immunity that other birds do.

Dry droppings in the loft are not bad for the birds. Actually, they can be quite good for them. Dry droppings created an environment that is undesirable for some bacteria, keeping the risk of disease down. I have seen birds in both environments and have seen firsthand the effects of both. I can say from what I have seen, birds coming from a dry loft that is not too clean are healthier and stronger than birds coming from a spotless loft, even if it is dry.

Again, I must stress DRY droppings. Wet droppings are quite the opposite and are bad for the birds. The most important thing is that the loft be dry. When I clean my loft I disinfect the loft using Oxine. I spray the floors, perches, nests, and etc. with the Oxine.

Another thing that is very important to the health of my birds is that I do not overcrowd them. My breeder pens are about 8 feet by 8 feet by just over 6 feet high. In these pens are enough nesting boxes for many pairs, but I limit these pens to no more than 7 to 10 pairs. Even my odd bird pens, which are 8 x 8 rarely hold over a dozen birds. For me, there is no such thing as too much room.

In most of my pens, the feeders are up off the floor. The reason for this is because there is no risk of feed sitting getting wet and moldy thus contributing to possible health problems.

In all of my pens, the water is kept up off the floor or on the outside of all pens. The birds reach through a hole to drink. The birds cannot take a bath in the water or get it dirty. I dump out my watering buckets every evening and the water is just as clean as it was when I first filled them that morning.

For feed, my birds get a starter-grower hog pellet, which is about 19% protein. This increases the protein for the birds and they will eat these pellets without a fight. During these cold winter months I will also add some corn to the mix. I additionally keep small feeders of a simple grain mix consisting of wheat, milo, and barley so the birds have some grain in their diet. My birds have grit in front of them at all times as well. With this simple feed system I have almost 0% mortality rate and the babies are fed well and wean with no trouble.

I do keep on hand some Brewer's Yeast tablets. Occasionally I give one or two to just weaned birds, but I have found the need for these has dramatically decreased over the last year or so.

My birds get Red Cell in their water (1 tablespoon to a gallon of water) pretty regularly, maybe three times per week. The other days they get Apple Cider Vinegar or Oxine in the water.

All of my birds get wormed once or twice a year. I alternate Piperazine with Ivomec to cover all the worms the birds could get. I use Bo-Bac 2X as a Paratyphoid vaccine once a year. I vaccinate all of my birds for PMV once a year around Labor Day. All of my babies get vaccinated for PMV when I wean them and then in September of the same year they were hatched. So all of my youngsters get two shots their first year then once annually after that.

I keep almost no medication on hand for myself as it almost always goes out of date before I can use it. I do keep a bottle of Fish Zole around just in case I see Canker in any young birds. I have had just one case of Canker in the last 3 years. I may also keep a broad-spectrum sulfa drug around such as Sulfadimethoxine to cover any colds, Coccidiosis, or any

other disease that may crop up. However, I have not had a case of Coccidiosis, Paratyphoid, Salmonella, or any other common diseases in my birds for a very long time. I do not medicate my birds unless it is necessary.

With this simple regiment I maintain a very healthy environment for my birds with very little trouble. My birds are calm, happy, and healthy. I believe one can over-think the management of the loft and get frustrated quickly. Newcomers can easily be overwhelmed with all the vaccines, medications, and vitamin supplements on the market today not to mention feed mixes, protein percentages, etc. This system works very well for me and is simple. I can also say that, with this system, I see a much higher quality of health, condition, and feather than I have ever seen as long as I have had Pigeons.

I hope this article has been helpful and informative and has shown how sometimes the simplest answer may be the best.