Red Gut

The deadly disease of adult and stock pigeons

Dr Ockert Botha (BVSc)

Red gut is a fatal disease caused by the Clostridium perfringens bacteria in pigeons. This disease is seen rarely in pigeons and only appears when particular environmental conditions prevail. When it however appears it normally causes a country wide outbreak that wreaks havoc. Such an outbreak it seems has struck South African pigeon fanciers once again.

Red gut normally breaks out when there is excessive rain and thunder storms. It is postulated that the spores (“microscopic seeds”) of this deadly bacterium is washed up from deep within the soil where it has been lying dormant for the last few years. The disease seems to more readily affect pigeons older than 3 years and top stock bird often die after a few days of being ill.

Symptoms start with pigeons appearing unwell and sitting fluffed up. The appetite soon disappears and pigeons start ingesting large amounts of water. Soon a yellow bubbly loose stool appears that turns dark green and later black. The crops do not empty and although the pigeons drink a lot of water they soon dehydrate. Some pigeons develop swollen abdomens due to peritonitis. Pigeons normally die within 3 – 5 days from showing the first symptoms and very few pigeons recover without the correct medication and support treatment.

Diagnosis is confirmed by veterinarians during a post mortem by way of specialized tests.

Red gut needs to be treated by a very specific antibiotic treatment. Amoxicillin at high doses is the fastest and most effective treatment. Dr Ockert Botha prepares a compounded antibiotic and immune stimulant product called “Muscle and Wing mix” (it is also highly effective against Muscle and wing disease) that is available on prescription.

As soon as the first signs of this dreaded disease is seen all pigeons in the entire loft should be placed on the combination of Avio-Entromune + Aviogel + “Muscle and Wing mix over the food for 7 days) after the first 7 days treatment with Avio-Entromune + Aviogel should continue for 3 more days.

All affected pigeons must immediately be isolated and treated individually. Pigeons crops should be milked empty and 1 ml of the prepared “Muscle and Wing mix” must be dosed directly into crop 2 x per day. Valuable and critically ill pigeons should be taken to the vet for intravenous or subcutaneous fluid administration and injections of Amoxicillin.

Pigeons should be removed from the loft and the loft thoroughly cleaned. Once cleaned the loft should be disinfected with Avio-Fumigone fumigation. Pigeons should only be returned after the complete fogging process has been completed. If possible the burning of cement or especially dirt floors should be done with a blow torch as this is the most effective in killing the spores.
Pigeon fanciers are welcome to phone me on 0829226355 to discuss this
disease if you cannot get hold of me send an e-mail to aviomed@vodamail.co.za