

Parathyroid?
Not Paratyphoid!
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Last year I was very distressed to find that one of my hens seemed unable to properly stand on her legs. What could possibly be wrong I thought? I watched her intently for signs? Any signs, any clues to what was going on. She was bright, in good weight, clean white wattle, no vertigo, no wrenching of her neck, no looking skyward and falling back, no nothing. Yet she was clearly not right.

Almost instinctively I went for the calcium pills. Put two down her throat and gave her some water. The very next day she seemed better. A few days later another hen. Now I was concerned no symptoms of any sickness or ill health yet clearly she was having a problem standing on her legs and to say the least she had little mobility.

An epidemic in the making? I didn't know and I was not going to wait and find out. I needed to be proactive, get the best minds immediately working on this problem. I called and emailed a highly respected vet. We chatted and though he was baffled he sought other international vets for advise. It is great when professional people are ready and willing to help at a moments notice. I waited and soon I had some feed back. They, these pigeon vets in two countries, were all somewhat baffled and essentially concluded that this was possibly the beginning of Paramixo virus or heaven forbid paratyphoid?. On the face of it you might come inevitably to this depressing conclusion. It is difficult to diagnose a bird at a distance by phone or email, but they certainly thought the worst. I knew that this info was wrong and I was not going to react in haste and without being convinced of what specific action was required for the safety of my birds. Most people might have erred on the side of supposed safety, needle them first, treat them first worry later. But not I as I have seen only too much over the past decade in the field of "modern medicine".

Other than the weak legs there were no symptoms and as such I was not about to panic regardless of what anyone might think, pro or not. More research was in order and so I began to seek the answer. Where would I find it? Where would I look ?I thought about it for a time and began reviewing old pigeon books and magazines. My collection of books includes many from the 19th century. Surely I would find something, or at least I hoped I would.

In the mean time I received a panic call from one of my club mates who oddly enough had the exact same symptoms in several of his hens and more surprisingly in one of his cocks! What was going on? He spoke to an MD in our club who suggested calcium immediately. Still it bothered me greatly. I have grit in the loft, oyster shell, wheat grass, pick stone. It had to be more than just the calcium. Possibly something gone wrong with

the birds ability to utilize calcium? Yes that might be it! But what? Why? Finally how to resolve , if a resolution was even possible.

As usually happens when you least expect to find something important you often stumble upon it. So it was that late into one night as I was reading some old correspondence from Dr. W.F. Hollander I came across an old spiral bound copy of “Pigeon Science: Popovers” edited by Dr. W.F. Hollander in 1987.

A book dedicated to open minded fanciers (Is there such a thing?) and especially the up and coming younger generation(that must mean us old guys now!). It had been Dr. Hollanders intention to start a dialogue with intelligent, curious active minds, to present new and old information and to initiate trains of thought (so many times I feel like the train has already left the station and is long gone).

Men of science take note of this simple definition of science from Dr. Hollander science is “organized knowledge” this includes both old supposedly familiar knowledge and new knowledge. So here I am in the 21st Century working on a series of observations and problems that were in fact and deed solved long ago. I just did not know it, nor did my exceedingly helpful men of science.

On page 2 of the aforementioned book I saw a brief article entitled , “ ***Hen Down, What To Do?***”. Yes I quickly read it and started to laugh. Here it was in a nutshell in an old book , mystery solved long ago. Why do we always have to repeat our errors, why do we never learn from the supposed old knowledge? I do not know and I guess that is why my motto as well as suggestion to all of my readers has always been, “ read , read everything, read what is good, read what is bad, read what is old and what is new for only by reading and discovering for ourselves will we be able to serve our own best interests and insure that we do not repeat so many errors from long ago.

Take note 21st men of science, fanciers and just us common folk with a little common sense and then pass it on to anyone who is having this problem and takes to needling his birds needlessly (by the way I have no use for vaccinations nor for anyone who does not take the time to research this area on his own to see what real harm he just may be doing to his birds, himself and his family). I quote directly Dr. Hollander from 1987: “ *Well, if you have Levi’s book The Pigeon, see paragraph # 380. Anyway , the parathyroid glands are essential for regulation of calcium and phosphorus metabolism .Particularly about egg-laying time when the hen has to mobilize large amounts of such substances. She may deplete her bone reserves if she is not properly supplied with minerals and vitamin D Then the parathyroid glands become enlarged probably overworked trying to correct the upset”*

Vitamin D? Though we do not fully understand the trigger for this upset we do know (and obviously have known for some time what the cure is) the cure .Give the hen or hens in question a capsule of Vitamin D down the throat and she will be fine very soon. There are a ton of brands that you can purchase from any drug store , and all of them are just fine.

Dr. Hollander goes on to say : “*well, I think the birds need a regular source of Vitamin D. It is stored in the liver so they can go weeks on a D-deficient diet without trouble, but instead of using pills every month I think plenty of sunshine (not through window glass) or feed containing vitamin D is desirable.. Pelleted feeds are all fortified with D, but they should not be fed if gone stale*”

“ Hen Down What To Do? Remember , Vitamin D ,this little piece of advice -it could save you some great hens, some bad times, possibly in some cases some needless vet bills and a lot of heartache.

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