

Super Supplements

The Way to Go

By Paul Gibbs

Over the years I have contributed several articles regarding and promoting the use of natural remedies and supplements that I believe are a better alternative to the continual and indiscriminate use of antibiotics. While there is a place and time to use antibiotics it should not be a fanciers first choice in addressing an issue and should only be used after a veterinarian has been consulted and at all times be used as directed.

Too many fanciers use antibiotics as a preventative after their birds return from a race for just one or two days, this is a total waste of time and money, more importantly for birds that have no diseases, or even those that may be carrying an issue a two day treatment would solve nothing and would only strengthen any bacteria's resistance that would result (should a fancier's birds become ill), in having to give them a stronger dose and/or for a longer period. Worse still many bacteria's would develop immunity to the drug being used.

It is far better to maintain good animal husbandry by making sure the loft environment is of a high standard, have good ventilation with no drafts, not over crowded, cleaned regularly with no dampness and disinfected and /or flame cleaned with a propane flame on a weekly basis.

If these things can be achieved you will be on your way to minimising many of the "ills" that can effect your birds. This being said, before undertaking the use of any "Super Natural Supplements" you should ensure that your birds are free of the three most common ailments that can effect the performance of your birds, these being worms, canker and coccidiosis as most natural supplements will not cure these common issues but will promote a defence for reinfestation by building and supporting the birds immune system keeping them healthy and in "Top Form".

This being said, let's now have a look at many of these "Natural Supplements" and their benefit to our birds. Some of what I am about to outline, many fanciers would be aware of and already probably use, others may not have heard about or used at this stage. Hopefully many fanciers will gain a useful insight and may consider using many of the following in an effort to maintain their bird's health and build their immunity in a "natural" way.

Let's start with the more commonly known natural supplements:

Garlic: Either as an oil or fresh. Garlic has the following benefits, helps to purify the blood, it has anti-bacterial, viral and anti-parasitic properties and it helps to promote good overall health by helping to build immunity to many pathogens.

As oil in can be obtained from several sources, the health food shop and/or as a product packaged for pigeons from various pigeon supply companies.

If fresh, I prefer to prepare it the night before by using a garlic crusher placing the crushed garlic in an old wine flagon, at 1 glove per litre, filling it with fresh water giving it a good shake several times before going to bed. In the morning I pour it through a sieve into a plastic bucket and fill with the required amount of fresh water before pouring it into the birds drinkers.

Lemon Juice: Fresh is best. Lemons are generally cheap and plentiful. I would not recommend the commercial bottled variety. As with garlic, lemons help to strengthen the immune system, assists with digestion and helps with the purification of blood. Lemons as we know are high in Vitamin C along with some Vitamin B and is also said to provide phosphorous as well. Lemon juice can be added to both grain and/or administered in the drinking water. When I use lemon juice I normally squeeze enough on the amount of grain I feed the birds at the time, just enough to dampen the grain as to assist in binding any powdered supplement to it i.e. Brewers Yeast. Whatever juice may still remain in the fruit I squeeze into the water containers.

Apple Cider Vinegar: There are many varieties/brands on the market, with the better ones containing what is referred to as “The Mother”. In my opinion the best brand is “Braggs” which is available in most supermarkets. Braggs Apple Cider Vinegar is totally organic, raw, unfiltered and unpasteurised. Apple cider vinegar helps promote a healthy immune system, reduces toxins and is believed to improve digestion by feeding the good bacteria in the gut.

Other benefits indicated by Bragg include that it is rich in potassium and calcium along with other life sustaining ingredients such as enzymes and minerals, which promote vitality and healing within the body. While apple cider vinegar won't eradicate canker, it will however go a long way in diminishing Trichomonas rates.

Oregano: Oregano is a herb used around the world in cooking and is known in herbal medicine for being a rich source of various minerals and vitamins, a product I believe pigeon fanciers should not be without as it can be used as an aid to help prevent Staphylococcus and Streptococcus infections, fungal infections, inflammation of the lungs and kidneys, Mycoplasma and E-coli along with providing support for the respiratory and digestive systems.

It is available in various forms to administer to pigeons by several product manufactures/suppliers i.e. as a powder, oil and liquid.

The one I favoured most was “Orego-stim for Pigeons” that I used nearly every day in the birds morning water. Unfortunately I have been told that it is no longer available and I am now in the process of importing another Oregano pigeon product from Holland for my own personnel use. The brand name of this product is “Dosto-Oregano”. (I will supply contact details of this product at the conclusion of this article for those that may wish to import their own).

Ginger: Ginger is a flowering plant native to China and its root has been used extensively in Asian cooking for centuries. It is considered to be one of the healthiest of plants (at least its roots) those that enjoy Asian food will testify as to its wonderful flavour. Ginger is known to improve the intestinal track and has anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial properties. It has been proven to be effective against E-coli and diarrhoea. Anyone who suffers from motion sickness can testify to the calming effect of Ginger Lozenges.

Ginger is known to be a good source of the following vitamins and minerals – Protein, Folates, Pantothenic acid, Pyridoxine, Vitamins A, C, E and K, Calcium Copper, Iron, Magnesium, Manganese, Phosphorus, Potassium Sodium and Zinc. (Ginger a true “Super Food”).

Ginger root is available in most super markets and is available as a tea especially in health food shops either in a powder form or in tea bags. I personally use the fresh root variety by grating about a teaspoonful and adding to herb tea that I give to my birds generally on Saturdays and Sundays.

Herb Teas: Herbal teas have been used by pigeon fanciers for many years, some preferring to make their own from a selection of herbs that may be available either locally or from the health food shop, but I believe that there are few commercial pigeon teas available that contain all the beneficial herbs supplied to the fancier in one convenient package. Herbal tea has been known to provide many benefits to both humans and our birds and depending on the exact herbs used will determine the benefit/result of its use. Many herb teas for human consumption only contain one herb but generally commercial pigeon herb tea contains several herbs design to help promote good health and build immunity by helping to purify the blood, clean the kidneys and liver along with promoting a healthy intestinal track.

One of the better brands is “Natural Thee” from the De Scheemaeker Bros. of Antwerp in Belgium. (These Natural Antwerp products are once again available in Australia). This particular tea is a blend of 16 plants that enhance recuperation when racing and breeding. Extensive research has led to the conclusion that “Natural Thee” facilitates the condition of the pigeons in a wholly natural manner.

Naturaline: Is a liquid product used to add to the drinking water and contains 15 varieties of plants and greens. It also contains Echinacea extracts, a plant extract that will enhance the general resistance of the pigeon. It will also help the pigeons to have better digestion, in that way it will help with the assimilation of the different substances in the food. The different components of the plants and greens have the beneficial effect on the respiratory, digestive and urinary tracts. Because “Naturaline” has these properties, the pigeons that receive it regularly will have rosy skin, the plumage will be much better and more over the pigeons will display different external signs of optimal health. (Again this is a Natural Antwerp product as the tea mentioned above).

Cinnamon: Cinnamon is a spice derived from the bark of a tree. It originated from Sri Lanka and has been widely used for centenaries by the Chinese and Egyptians. It is commonly used today on desserts, apple pies and glazed rolls and is a “superpower” spice in disguise. There are many health benefits that can be attributed to Cinnamon

not only for us, but also for use with our pigeons. These include Anti-Microbial Properties that inhibit bacterial growth. Its anti-microbial properties have shown to effectively eliminate the Candia strain of bacteria, which is known to cause yeast infections as well as E-coli, which is responsible for urinary tract infections.

Known vitamins and minerals in Cinnamon include – Manganese, Iron, Calcium, Vitamins C and K. As can be seen above Cinnamon has many benefits as an Antibacterial and Antimicrobial fighter. Combined with this it has Antioxidant properties and is an Anti fungal compound.

It can also be used as a weapon against various viruses along with being a preventative in the fight and control of Canker, Salmonella and respiratory diseases. Cinnamon can be purchased at most supermarkets in the herb and spice section, or from health food shops.

Brewers Yeast: What can I say about this great product that hasn't been said before. It would be one of the most widely used supplements by fancier's world wide, an economical product loaded with "super" benefits. It's a product easily attainable, being available in supermarkets, health food stores and from commercial pigeon suppliers. There are many derivatives of the so-called product with some being a "yeasts" of a sort but not necessarily derived from the actual brewing of the beer process. One such product is **I.D.Yeast**, used by many fanciers including myself, but if I had the chance to actually be able to purchase true brewers yeast, one that still smelt like beer, I would. Lets look at I.D. Yeast, still a great product but not my first choice. The label tells us that this product is an "inactive" dry yeast that is rich in Vitamin B and high in Protein (45-50%). It has been produced by "non-alcoholic" propagation and therefore contains none of the impurities that "**may**" be found in brewers yeast and has been sterilised to remove bacterial contaminants.

If I had the choice, and if it were available, I would prefer to use the **Natural Antwerp** product "**Vitaminor**" (a true brewers yeast) I hope that the current importers of these Natural Antwerp products will see their way clear to add this product to their list in the near future. Keep in mind that "Vitaminor" has been supplied to fanciers around the world for many years, and if there were an issue with it the manufactures would have stopped suppling it years ago.

Let's have a look at the Natural Antwerp Brewers Yeast (Vitaminor). This product is a brewer's yeast grown on "wort, grains and sugar derivatives" (wort is used to make malt from dried sprouted barley, used in the production of good quality beer and malt Scotch Whiskeys). The raw material is only obtained from breweries. It is dried thoroughly and prepared with great care without the addition of any chemical agents. It is a 100% natural product rich in amino acids, vitamins (mainly the B group) and organic mineral elements. The producers of Vitaminor claim that it increases the pigeon's resistance against diseases and stress, stimulates the metabolism and has a positive effect on recovery after physical effort.

Spirulina: I believe I have left the best till last, "Spirulina". One of nature's riches sources of protein (65% of it's weight) 300% more than fish, meat or poultry. It is 58% richer in iron than spinach (being a natural non-toxic and easily absorbed

source). A rich wholesome source of anti-oxidants, 25 x richer in beta-carotene than carrots and is a highly concentrated source of essential fatty acids along with various minerals that include Calcium, Potassium, Magnesium, Zinc and Phosphorus.

Gram for gram, Spirulina is one of nature's richest and most complete sources of nutrition; it is widely used throughout the world as a food supplement for maintaining health and energy.

For those not familiar with this product, it is derived from a 100% natural and highly nutritious form of algae that is grown in water in tropical and sub-tropical lakes. In its commercial form it is a very dense very fine dark green powder that is readily available in both supermarkets and health food shops.

I use one that I buy from Woolworth's. Its not expensive and I use it 2-3 times a week on the feed that has either garlic oil, oregano oil or lemon juice on it at the rate of 1 rounded teaspoon to a kilo of grain.

If using Spirulina there is no need to feed your birds spinach or other greens that could be contaminated by chemicals and/or by a variety of insects/snails/slugs that could spread diseases and introduce worms.

While I use all of the above at various times on a regular basis, and vary their use according to creating a balanced diet and depending on the weather and time of the year i.e. breeding, moulting and/or racing.

The three products I use most would be garlic (oil and/or fresh), oregano (oil and/or liquid), brewers/ID yeast and of course "Spirulina".

Most of these supplements can be used by us (the fancier), and we would probably be better off for using them.

I would like to hope that those who tend to over use antibiotics will re-think their use and try to build the health and immunity of their birds in a more natural way by using these "Super Supplements" instead, and for those who seek to improve their birds performance, general health and maintain form could do a lot worse that try a program using some, if not all of these "Super Supplements".

For those wishing more information regarding the oregano product listed above (Dosto-Oregano) should contact VET Schroeder by email at:

info@schroeder-tollisan.co or www.schroeder-tollisan.com

I would like to finish with the following quote by Josh Billings who said and I quote:

"There are two kinds of fools, those who can't change their opinions and those who won't".