



## Wet canker control during racing

By Dr. Colin Walker. BSc BVSc MRCVS

With racing now in full swing in some states and just about to start in others, ones attention turns to the most common form inhibiting disease namely wet canker.

Let me just state that it is simply not possible for the birds to give of their best if they have wet canker.

This health problem is extremely common and, in fact, it is my experience that once the stress of racing starts, if it has been longer than three weeks since birds have been treated than approximately 90% of them will test positive to this problem. Given this incidence, unless a crop flush has been done to show that the birds are free of the problem it is safer to assume infection and treat the birds for it. For most fanciers, it is unrealistic to think that for some particular reason their birds are not going to develop the problem given the fact that their birds are in the same baskets as all the others, drinking the same water and coming under the same stress.

And so how does one achieve control? The aim is to give the lowest level of medication that keeps the birds free of canker organisms. This will vary from one loft to another depending on factors such as the genetic make up of the birds, how well they are cared for and the type of canker strains present. Because of these factors, what works well in one loft may fail to give control in another. Different fanciers tend to use different protocols all with success so

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that in one loft 1 day of Emtryl per week may work well while in another loft 3 days of Turbosole every third week also works well. An additional factor to consider is that canker strains vary in their sensitivity to particular medications. Resistance it seems to all of the common anti canker drugs occurs and from this point of view no particular drug is better than another. Similarly, because of the possibility of drug resistance fanciers can't assume that just because the birds have been treated with a particular medication that the canker organisms have been cleared.

Ideally, the best way to determine both the frequency of dosing and length of treatment required, is through monitoring crop flushes. Also crop flushing is a good idea after treatment to ensure that treatment has been successful.

When testing is not possible or practical, I find that in the majority of lofts giving 2 days on an anti canker drug every second week (usually on Monday and Tuesday) during racing gives good control. In order to head off resistance I find it best to periodically change the medication used. I usually recommend basing a control program on a ronidazole product (eg. Turbosole) because this is the safest medication available and perhaps using this for 2 or 3 treatments whilst substituting with an alternative medication ( eg. Flagyl or Emtryl) every third or fourth treatment.

Fanciers wishing more information can contact me at  
The Knox Bird Clinic on (03) 9800 5311.

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