



Newsletter

Term: **Summer** | Issue **6** | February & March 2023

MEDICATION **ON THE FOOD** VS MEDICATION **IN THE WATER**

We receive regular questions from fanciers wanting to know if they can rather give a product instructed for use “in the water” over food instead, and vice versa. **We therefore address this in this newsletter.**

Products that are **insoluble in water** are **always added to the food** and at the dosage prescribed. No further discussion is needed for these products.

Water-soluble products can, in most cases, be added to **food or water**.

How are the dosages calculated if only the dosage given in water appears on the label?

In this situation we need to know how much a pigeon eats and drinks in a day.

When medication registrations are done, water and food consumptions are measured. Internationally, and over many years it has been accepted that an intake of **50mls water and 30gms of food per day are accepted as the average for a pigeon.**

This equates to the birds drinking 1,6 times more water than the food they eat.

Always remember that 1 litre of water weighs 1Kg.

Labels on some products give dosages for food **and** water. To simplify calculations, the dosage given on the food is simply doubled to that given in the water. An example of this is the dosage given on the label of our Medilyte where the dosage on food is simply doubled that given in water.

This is not quite as accurate as the 1,6 that it should be. If you have access to a scale you can calculate the dosages more accurately. If the dosage on the label says 5gms per litre then the dosage on the food would be $5 \times 1,6 = 8\text{gms}$ on 1 kg of food.

Which method is best?

Water medication

Advantages:

When the product, usually in powder form, is added to the water, it is evenly distributed throughout the water. All pigeons drinking the same quantity of water will be getting the same dosage of the active ingredient. No pigeon gets too little or too much.

The treatment would work out cheaper because less is being added to the water. Some of this advantage would be lost because water not drunk during the day would be discarded.

Food medication

Advantages:

If the birds are fed twice daily and medication is added on both occasions, they would be getting their medication in two dosages and not multiple times as with water medication (every time they drink). Having said that though, when a pigeon eats twice daily most of the water it drinks during the day would be after these two meals. They do though, drink a little during the day between meals. This reduces the effect of strict twice daily dosing that we get with food medication.

With some medications, adding it to the food would be an advantage especially for antimicrobials (antibiotics and antiprotozoals.)

When a doctor prescribes an antibiotic it would often be prescribed to be given 1 to 3 times daily depending on the rate of metabolism (**see explanation below) of that antibiotic. Although not an exact science medicating the food twice daily would be effective.

**Different types of antibiotics have different “half-lives” (the times it takes for that antimicrobial in the user’s body to reduce by half). This is why taking certain antibiotics twice a day, 12 hours apart, can help to ensure that the substance remains at sufficient levels to inhibit the bacteria, and hence to ensure it is properly effective.

If the birds are fed the correct amount of food there would be no wastage.

Disadvantages:

It is highly unlikely that the medication would be evenly distributed throughout the food. Without proper mixing machines this would be impossible. This would result in some birds getting more medication than others.

This is **less of a problem with vitamin preparations** compared to any antimicrobials which could be under- or overdosed. **This is a big disadvantage.**

It is more expensive to medicate food.

In closing...

When two medications need to be given one can be added to the food and the other to the water.

Medication of water is generally more commonly used if the product is water soluble.