



Newsletter

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Pigeon Malaria

Misconceptions about prevention and treatment

With the **racing season** approaching, everyone is busy with the preventative treatment program that is needed at this time of the year.

These treatments are discussed on social media (chat groups, Facebook etc.)

Some fanciers are using the wrong treatments.

These are:

- Doxycycline is being used as preventative treatment at this time of the year. It is used in human Malaria caused by Plasmodium but is not effective against Pigeon Malaria/Pseudomalaria, caused by Haemoproteus. They are two completely different diseases, one carried by mosquitoes and the other by the pigeon fly. Many fanciers claim that the birds look better after treatment. This is because subclinical Ornithosis, Mycoplasma or bacterial infections have been cleared. We have tested the efficacy of Doxycycline against Pigeon Malaria by examining blood smears before and after treatment. It is not effective.
- Tonic water is used because it contains Quinine. Hundreds of years ago it was effective against human Malaria caused by Plasmodium. It is used very little today. We have the same situation here. Human and Pigeon Malaria are two different diseases with two different vectors involved. The amount of Tonic water added to the drinking water dilutes the Quinine so much that it would not be effective in any event.

What is the ideal preventative treatment for Pigeon Malaria?

In a nutshell – Ten days of **Primaquin** before training and racing starts and then one to two days of **Primaquin** once weekly throughout the year.