

Preparation of the stock birds for the breeding season.

Parasites.

Start by ensuring the birds are parasite free. The important parasites are

1. Roundworm, Hairworm and Mites.

Many avian vets recommend **moxidectin** 2mg/ml at a dose of 5ml/1 L for 24 hours. This is a palatable water soluble liquid that in addition to worming the birds also kills all external parasites that feed off blood. This includes all mites (including feather mites and air sac mites). No need to withdraw food and does not affect feather quality. Ensure the loft is particularly thoroughly cleaned after treatment to minimize the chance of re-infection.

2. Tapeworm.

If tape worms are a concern a product is available that combines moxidectin with praziquantel (the medication of choice against tapeworm). This product is bitter and the birds are reluctant to drink it. Use the syrup as you would a tablet and give each bird 0.25ml (5 drops) individually to the mouth. Remember tapeworms are carried by insects. Cleaning and spraying with an insecticide e.g. permethrin onto the scraped surfaces and into the nooks and crannies will decrease the chance of re-infection.

3. Coccidia.

Easily controlled with **Toltrazuril** 3ml/1 L for 24 hours.

4. Lice.

Dip all birds in **permethrin**. To prepare a dip, add 10ml permethrin to 1L of water. This works out to 120ml to the average bucket, which is about 12L. To this add 1 cap of baby shampoo to act as a wetting agent. Dip all birds by immersing their body, fanning their wings and tail and then momentarily dipping their head. Best to make the water warm and dip on the morning of a warm day.

Canker.

There is no benefit in treating for canker prior to breeding unless more than 10% of youngsters had canker in the previous breeding season, or there have been significant numbers of new breeding birds introduced shortly prior to pairing. Best time to treat if needed is not prior to pairing but prior to hatching. Preferred products contain ronidazole. Products containing dimetridazole are not appropriate to use during breeding as they interfere with sperm production in the cocks leading to clear eggs (for up to 6 weeks). Also the increased water intake of feeding birds can lead to toxic levels of this drug being ingested.

Chlamydia.

Chlamydia in the breeding season causes late and irregular laying, dead in-shell embryos and weak youngsters that die soon after hatching. If these problems were experienced during the previous breeding season and were diagnosed as being due to Chlamydia the birds can be treated prior to pairing with doxycycline for 7-20 days. Please note that most dead-in-shell youngsters are due to either poor incubation by the parents or problems with temperature and

Humidity within the nest box.

Salmonella.

If Salmonella has been diagnosed in the previous breeding season or during the year give **enrofloxacin** 25mg/ml, 10ml/1 L for ten days finishing at least two weeks before breeding. At the completion of this course maintain ongoing dry, hygienic conditions in the loft. Regular avian probiotics eg. **Probac** given either in the water(1tsp/2L) or the food (1tsp/kg) will decrease the spread of Salmonella through the loft throughout breeding.

GOOD IDEAS As the breeding season approaches.

1. It is a good idea to spray the nest boxes with Permethrin prior to breeding to decrease later problems with red mite, mosquitoes and pigeon flies.
2. Ensure the ongoing provision of palatable calcium supplements before and during breeding. A good quality grit such as **Health Grit**, a pink mineral such as **PVM** powder and a picking stone such as the APC **Mineral Block** should always be available. Calcium given in the water two to three times weekly in the last month prior to pairing will help ensure adequate calcium levels. Preferred product is **Calcivite Plus**, a sugar free water soluble blend of calcium, magnesium and vitamin D3. Dose is 5ml/L

Optimize breeding results.

1. A complete multivitamin/mineral drink eg. **Multivite Plus** can be given 1 or 2 days weekly.
2. **ID Yeast** is rich in the entire vitamin B group and high in protein(45%). Adding this to the grain after pre-moistening with a seed oil will increase the vigour, growth rates, weaning weights and feather quality of the youngsters. Pre-moisten grain with **Polyseed Oil**, 1 ml/kg and then add ID Yeast. Stir and feed. The birds love it.
3. Regular probiotics 1tsp/2L, 1 or 2 days per week will decrease bowl disease and lead to more robust young being weaned.