

Pigeon flyers around the world have all heard of paramyxovirus or PMV. This is a viral disease that is not to be confused with the bacterial disease [paratyphoid](#) caused by Salmonella typhimurium. PMV is caused by one of the serotypes of PMV1 viruses which happens to be closely related to another PMV1 virus that causes Newcastle Disease. We will mention this again when it comes to vaccination. PMV first started in the late 1970's in the middle east and has since been found everywhere that pigeons are raised.

The virus is not very tough and dies quickly in the environment. Once a bird is infected it will shed the virus in the droppings and other secretions for three weeks. Between exposure and clinical signs, however, can vary immensely, from a few days to several weeks. This can be a big problem in futurity lofts when YB's are shipped that are infected and shedding the virus, yet are not showing clinical signs. They can have an entire loft exposed before you ever know you have a problem.

Clinical signs are primarily related to two organ systems. The kidney and the nervous system. This virus ALWAYS causes an inflammation of the kidney called interstitial nephritis. When this occurs the white portion of the droppings changes to water and you often find puddles of water on the perches. Within that puddle will be NORMAL fecal material in the form of green or brown "worms". This is NOT a true diarrhea since the fecal material from the intestine is normal. Since the kidney changes are uniform in the flock of infected pigeons, the kidney is the organ of choice to send to the lab for diagnosis. The changes in the kidney seen under the microscope, when coupled with clinical signs, provide you with a pretty sure diagnosis. These watery droppings can persist for 2 to 3 months after infection in a flock of pigeons. The second organ system involved is the nervous system. The two main signs we see are nerve paralysis shown as a lameness or dropped wing, or torticollis (twisted necks). When this disease 1st hit the scene the neurological signs were very prevalent. Recently, however, these symptoms only seem to show up in 10 to 20% of the birds at the most. Most pigeons with the neurological signs will recover if they can eat and drink. Therefore, if you have neglected vaccination and you get this bug in your loft you don't have to destroy good pigeons. Just make sure they eat and drink and you will have the vast majority come back to normal, even to race again.

Vaccination for this disease is critical since there are only two types of unvaccinated pigeons, those that have the disease and those that are going to get it sometime. You may have been lucky so far but you will not be forever. By far and away the only PROVEN method of vaccination is to use the injectable pigeon PMV vaccine. There is one made in the States by Maine Biological Labs and several in Europe. Unfortunately, a lot has been said about the use of the chicken "LaSota" vaccine available in the U.S. and Canada. This is NOT a pigeon virus, and is made to inoculate chickens against Newcastle disease which we mentioned earlier. It has been variously promoted to be dripped in the eyes, the nose, or placed in the drinking water. This vaccine will in no way harm your birds, but EVERY study has shown it to be ineffective. I personally have had several lofts in the states send in PMV infected birds that were inoculated with the "LaSota" vaccine and yet still had the disease. The injectable vaccine has also been incriminated by some excellent flyers as harming performance. My experience with the injectable vaccine in my loft and many other ALL-AMERICAN lofts is that it does NOT HURT PERFORMANCE. In short, if you use the "LaSota" type vaccine and your birds get sick, it is your fault, you have been warned. In fairness to the "LaSota" vaccine, many flyers use it as an immune stimulant in the

water before a big race with excellent results. I personally have not had experience in that area, I have never used it to know.

Treatment for PMV is only symptomatic. NO drugs that you can give the pigeon will kill the virus (without killing the bird). Simply do the following:

Make sure infected birds eat and drink Make sure that other diseases are not present, cocci, worms, canker, ect. If 2nd infections like [E. coli](#) show up, treat with the appropriate antibiotic base on cultures at the vet.

So, in short, what does the pigeon flyer need to know about PMV.

It is out there and vaccination with the injectable vaccine is critical. Symptoms primarily are watery droppings and neurological signs. Infected birds usually survive with supportive care.

Remember, PMV is a terrible and devastating disease for the pigeon fancier to deal with. But, there is NO reason to ever have to deal with it because of an effective vaccine.

Paramyxovirus Virus Basics By Dr. Steve Weir DMV