

Pigeon Nutrition

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Most hobbyists feed pigeon pellets of one kind or another, which are usually about 15% protein. Yet others feed poultry laying pellets containing 16% or 17% protein. Some fanciers also feed gran in addition to pellets and yet there are some who feed grain exclusively. The system, which works best for me , is that of feeding half 17% laying pellets and half-grain mixture consisting of about 15% protein.

The feeding of pigeons differs radically from the feeding of other fowl or poultry. They do poorly on mash and green feed is not necessary. They do not produce well on the ordinary low protein grain mixture used for chickens since 13.5% to 15% protein is required for good growth of young squabs. A high protein grain such as Austrian Winter peas, cow peas, Canada peas, and ect. must be used to get the desired protein level in the pigeon grain rations.

A good pigeon feed contains other essential elements besides protein. 60% to 70% should be in carbohydrates, 2% to 5% in fat, and no more than 5% fiber. Proteins are used to build and repair tissue and are essential to the production of large squabs. Carbohydrates and fats furnish the energy requirements and supply material to build fat. Pigeons don't utilize fiber to advantage; therefore the fiber content should be kept below 5%.

The ingredients used in my home-prepared grain ration are corn, grain sorghum (milo), wheat, and Austrian peas. The reason for using Austrian Winter peas is due to it's accessibility in the South. Other areas of our country may have Canada peas, cow peas, or garden peas more readily available.

Corn is one of the best feeds for pigeons and is the basis of all diets for this purpose. Yellow corn is the primary source of Vitamin A in pigeon diets. White corn should be avoided because it is deficient in Vitamin A. Pigeons have the ability to eat large kernels of corn and there is no advantage in paying higher prices for small grain corn.

Milo is a harder grain than corn but similar in composition and is a good feed for pigeons. It however lacks Vitamin A but is good to feed with corn in a ration.

Wheat is a cereal grain, which is higher in protein than corn and milo. There are some who contend that wheat also improves fertility. Wheat will vary in protein analysis depending on variety and where it is grown. Hard red winter wheat will be higher in protein than soft red winter wheat. West Coast grown wheat will be lower in protein than wheat grown in other areas of the country.

Peas are the most essential grain in pigeon diets as they are high in protein, vitamins, and are excellent for squab development. This ingredient would probably be the highest priced in this ration. The following two rations should give you an idea of mixing your own pigeon grain. The first ration is approximately 13.5% protein and the second is Approximately 16% protein.

#1				
Lbs. of Feed	Ingredients	% Protein	% Ingredients	Total Protein
30	Wheat	13.2	.30	3.96
25	Milo	10.9	.25	2.73
25	Corn	8.9	.25	2.23
20	Peas	23.4	.20	4.68
100 lbs.				13.60%
#2				
Lbs of Feed	Ingredients	% Protein	% Ingredients	Total Protein
20	Wheat	13.2	.20	2.64
20	Milo	10.9	.20	2.18
20	Corn	8.9	.20	1.78
40	Peas	23.4	.40	9.36
100 lbs.				15.96%