

Illnesses or injuries affecting the neck: Concussion

If you see a pigeon with concussion you would be forgiven if you thought – mistakenly – that it had broken its neck and that there was no hope for it. But they can make a partial recovery within 24 hours and a complete recovery in a matter of days!

In her booklet **Homeopathic Treatment for Birds**, Beryl M Chapman describes concussed birds as standing with the head hanging down between the legs, or as lying down with wings extended and with its head twisted or held against its neck. She also says that they can be found fluttering in circles with their legs dragging behind them. When I found a concussed wood pigeon she was lying on the ground, flapping ineffectually with her eyes closed. Her neck was limp.

It is important that a pigeon suffering from concussion is not out under a heat lamp or on a heat pad.

Because they have probably suffered a blow to the head they will have a bad headache and will need to be somewhere cool, quiet and dark to recover.

I placed the wood pigeon in a towel formed into a “donut” shape, so that her head was supported and the danger of food or liquid spilling from her crop and being accidentally inhaled (which would be fatal) was reduced. I was lucky to have Beryl M Chapman’s book and some homeopathic remedies, so in accordance to the book’s instructions I gave her Arnica 200, giving her one pillule, once an hour for three hours. After that I reduced to the 30th potency 4 times a day.

I mixed up some rehydration solution (1/2 pint warm water, 1/2 tablespoon Glucose (or you can use honey, or sugar) and 1/2 teaspoon of salt. I dipped her beak in the mixture without allowing the water to cover her nostrils and was surprised to find that even though she couldn’t lift her head she could sip and swallow water. She drank eagerly.

Once I had established that she could swallow I gave her a single drop of Metacam that I had for the dog, placing it at the very front of her lower beak.

During the day I kept an eye on her, making certain that she was comfortable

and that her head was propped up, dipping her beak in the rehydrating solution regularly. When I went to bed that night she was still unable to lift her head, but when I checked up on her at 2 am she was holding it in the normal position and I was able to offer her food (birdseed and defrosted peas) in a dish which I placed within easy reach of her beak. .

It took her a few days to recover her ability to stand, and then to walk and then to fly but within a week she was back to normal.

Illnesses or injuries affecting the Neck: Paramyxovirus

If you see a pigeon that is pecking at seed but missing it, tossing seed backwards over its head when it manages to pick one up, twisting its head at



an unnatural angle or upside down , looking dizzy , looking drunk or spinning in circles, then the most likely cause is pigeon paramyxovirus.

Despite the severity of the symptoms the pigeons don't usually appear to be in discomfort or ill, we tend to describe them as "otherwise well"! However, The pigeon will need to be caught in order to isolate it from other pigeons that might become infected and to give it the supportive care that it will need to survive the disease.

Pigeon PMV can damage a pigeon's nervous system. Some pigeons make a quick recovery but can have the symptoms (not the virus) return weeks or months later, some will take longer as the healing process can be very slow, others will have residual nervous symptoms for the rest of their lives and will be unreleasable.

If you decide to take a pigeon with paramyxovirus to a rescue centre or to a vet the most likely outcome is that it will be euthanased, because PPMV is an infectious disease that requires the bird to be isolated from other pigeons for at least 6 weeks and most centres don't have the resources to do that. However, there are a few rescue centres that are equipped for nursing pigeons with PMV and some will be able to offer them a permanent haven if they don't make a complete recovery.

PIGEON PARAMYXOVIRUS is a viral disease that does not affect man or animals, but a human that handles a pigeon with PMV or the live vaccine can develop conjunctivitis if sensible precautions are not taken (eg, do not touch your eyes immediately after handling a pigeon with PMV or the live vaccine).

The incubation period can vary from a few days to several weeks. The most common symptoms seen by the rescuer, though only a few will be seen at the same time are : Pigeon turning in circles, difficulty picking up seed, pecking and missing, tossing seed backwards, staggering, extremely watery poops, thin broken solid droppings in a pool of liquid, fine tremor of eyes or head somersaulting in flight, crash landing, twisting neck, head upside down (torticollis, star gazing) , spiraling in flight, flying backwards , having fits,



walking backwards.

Some of these symptoms are found in other illnesses, **but not in the same combination**. The presence of PPMV antibodies can be established by a blood test, I would advise anyone who suspects PMV and wants this confirmed, or wants to eliminate other causes of the symptoms, to use the [Retford Poultry Partnership](#) postal testing service.

Wildlife Rescue Centres tend to diagnose PMV on a combination of symptoms, eg polyuria (passing a lot of water) and polydipsia (drinking a lot of water)

without weight loss, or polyuria and nervous symptoms.

During the recovery period keep pigeons with Pigeon PMV in a quiet, warm (not hot) cage with soft flooring away from any intense light source. Provide a brick for perching.

To ensure that they are able to pick up food place seed in a deep dish so that if they stab at random they can pick seed up.

Because Pigeon PMV can cause fits pigeons are at risk of drowning but they need free access to water. Provide water (with added electrolytes if possible) in a deep narrow container to minimise the risk of accidental drowning. Watch the pigeon to ensure it is drinking.

Hand feeding may be necessary. Frozen peas and sweetcorn thawed in hot water for about 10 minutes can be hand fed as in this video. Aim for **at least** 100 pidgeces of corn or peas a day. Keep feeling the crop, a full crop feels like a beanie baby, squidgy.