



GUIDE FOR THE FALCONER

SOURCES OF CAPTIVE FOOD

As they have not eaten any food themselves, day-old chicks may be regarded as uncooked eggs in a different form (without the benefit of the calcium rich shell), and contain large amounts of phosphorus and cholesterol and a correspondingly very small amount of calcium. The calcium: phosphorus (Ca: P) ratio required by birds in their diet is 1.5:1; but that of a day-old chicks is probably only of the order of 0.25:1.

The calcium deficiency involved in feeding day-old chicks may lead to underlying (and unnoticed) deficiencies of nutrition, producing difficulties in egg-laying, poor growth and performance and even fits.

Breeding birds have dietary requirements different from working birds - both require adequate Ca:P ratios and a supply of readily available calcium, but the latter need more energy. Chicks from deficient birds may develop rickets.



It is thought that the surplus of cholesterol in the yolk of day-old chicks can lead to arterial disease (atherosclerosis) in sedentary birds, especially those that are kept as aviary birds beyond "middle age" on a diet consisting solely of day-old chicks. The cholesterol level in the diet can be reduced substantially by squeezing or washing out the yolks before feeding.

One must take care that dead day-old chicks do not introduce diseases such as Salmonella and Newcastle Disease.

The agent used to kill the chicks must also be considered. Carbon dioxide is quite safe to the bird consuming the chick but carbon tetrachloride is poisonous and should be avoided.

A better food source is one which is comprised of individual adult animals (birds, mammals or fish for the piscivorous species) which have eaten food themselves (they are what they eat too!) and different supplements can be provided depending on the birds varying requirements. Adult mice and rats have a calcium content of about 2.5% of their dry matter, and are therefore a better source of calcium than day-old chicks in which the corresponding figure is only 1.54%. So a frozen store of dead mammals and healthy adult bird carcasses is worth much more than



all the day-old chicks in the Country. Bear in mind that quail and lab rodents are fed artificial diets and do not always equate nutritionally with a wild quail or rat. Examine the source of your mammal carefully - obviously, poisoned rodents can poison the birds that feed on them but some intensively-bred rodents can carry insecticides and other chemicals, to which they themselves are tolerant, with disastrous results to the more susceptible raptor. Adult birds used as food should also be thoroughly examined for signs of disease before being considered, avoid pigeons as a food source.

Prime beef is considered by many as a good food source for carnivorous creatures but carnivorous means flesh-eating (ie whole-carcass-eating including what the animal itself has just eaten) and not just muscle-meat-eating even prime beef has a Ca:P ratio of only 0.5:1.

Supplementation is available in many different forms and the range of choices is often confusing to the bird-keeper: Calcium salts (each with various degrees of availability of elemental calcium) are traditional and useful but unfortunately insoluble, bulky and rather unpalatable - calcium lactate has much to recommend it, but calcium phosphate (bone flour) also adds phosphorus to the diet, and therefore rather defeats the object of calcium supplementation. The Ca:P ratio of many vitamin products is 1.2:1 and therefore do not contain enough calcium to redress the relative excess of phosphorus in a day-old chick.

VETARK VITAMINS TO HELP YOU MAINTAIN HEALTHY BIRDS

Nutrobal has a high Ca:P ratio (46:1 - enough to redress the day-old chick deficiency) and is especially useful to maintain birds in breeding condition, especially when losing calcium in the form of their eggshells. **ACE-High**, high in A, C, and E, all vitamins required during stress and convalescence and useful when breeding. **AVIMIX** with a Ca:P ratio of 30:1 is a readimix of the **Nutrobal** and **ACE-High** for the birdkeeper with only a few birds. An excellent general purpose vitamin for birds on reasonably balanced diets. This is the recommended general purpose supplement for adult birds.

SICK BIRDS

As a first line in support of dull birds our water soluble probiotic (culture of friendly bacteria) **AVIPRO PLUS** can be put on the food or given in water through a tube. This will help if birds have been stressed or injured, or are being treated with antibiotics. Our **Critical Care Formula** can also be given by tube to birds which are not eating.

CLEANSING & DISINFECTION

Some falconers make the basic assumption that because nobody cleans up after birds in the wild that they must live in filthy mews or flights, there is also often a statement alongside this suggesting that being too clean makes them sterile and have low resistance. This is rubbish, birds need cleanliness, in the wild the rain and sun clean their nests etc, they are not forced to live within close proximity to old mutes etc.

It is important wherever possible to keep the birds environment clean. For routine easy cleansing we recommend **ARK-KLENS**, where total cleaning and disinfection are required we recommend **TAMODINE-E**, which is anti-viral and anti-fungal (eg. Aspergillus).

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