



Press Release – 9 May 2017

To: The Management Committees of all Racing Pigeon Federations, Combine Entities, Country Clubs, One-Loft Races, Fancy Pigeon Associations and Subscribers to ANRPB Inc.

Re: Update 6: Rota-virus update PLUS

Dear All,

**1. Joint announcement Dr Walker & Dr White
When will the Rota Vaccine be available?**

We have been asked many times over the last 2 months but particularly over the last few days, when will the Rota vaccine be available? This is understandable as fanciers need to know whether or not to train their birds and officials need to organise programs. It is hard, however, for us to be exact because of the complexity of what we are doing. We do, however, try to give as much information as we can. Frustratingly some fanciers are looking at our more optimistic estimates while others look at the more pessimistic ones and promote these according to their agenda.

So what is the state of play? Quite simply, the vaccine has the potential to be available as early as August but may not be available until the first few months of 2018. Initially we thought that the vaccine would be available by the end of the year and that even with a few delays by February / March of next year. Either way this meant that if it was necessary to miss any races or shows it would only be for this year. As things progressed we were ahead of schedule. At the moment if everything goes perfectly, the vaccine could be available as early as August. However, when dealing with something as technically complex and subject to regulatory matters as the manufacture of a vaccine there is plenty of potential for delay. To produce and make a vaccine normally takes several years and so even having a vaccine available by the end of the year would be regarded as blisteringly fast and a very successful job and yet this is entirely possible. Fanciers should be aware that everyone working on the vaccine, Dr Mark White and his talented team at Treidlia BioVet, Dr Travis Beddoe and his colleagues at La Trobe

www.anrpb.org

Australian National Racing Pigeon Board Inc.
enquiries@anrpb.org



University and myself are all aware of the urgency of the need and are doing everything possible to expedite the process. Progress in the vaccine's development will be chronicled on the Melbourne Bird Veterinary Clinics website on the Rota Update section and fanciers and federation officials should use this as their source of information.

*Dr Colin Walker - Melbourne Bird Veterinary Clinic & Dr Mark White - Treidlia BioVet
9 May 2017*

2 Rota virus update:

A. Vaccine Trials

Work is well underway for the production of a Rota virus vaccine.

Dr Colin Walker and a senior member of Dr Mark White's team are already working on gaining the necessary Biosecurity and Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) approvals for the vaccine to be used on pigeons in Australia. An application has also been made for an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant; although the outcome of that application will not be known for some time. This grant should cover two thirds of the cost for developing the rotavirus vaccine.

In Melbourne trials of six test Rota virus vaccines is currently in progress. These tests involve Dr Colin Walker "volunteering" to use 35 of his stock cocks for the trial and injecting them with trial vaccines produced by Dr Travis Beddoe at Latrobe University. For those technically inclined these vaccines have been produced by extracting DNA antigen proteins from the G18P rotavirus. These were then mixed with a benign strain of ecoli, that is known to grow rapidly, to produce the test "synthetic" vaccines.

The test birds will be boosted 2 weeks after the initial vaccination and at the same time blood will be withdrawn to measure the level of immunity the trial vaccines have developed. The birds will then be re-tested two weeks later.

These trials are expected to take between four to six weeks. The trial vaccine that then produces the highest level of immunity will be sent to Sydney where Dr Mark White's company, Treidlia Biovet, will produce commercial quantities of the rotavirus vaccine

www.anrpb.org

Australian National Racing Pigeon Board Inc.
enquiries@anrpb.org



for anticipated availability to pigeon fanciers potentially as early as mid/late-August 2017.

As the development of vaccines normally takes in excess of two years the ANRPB would like to officially acknowledge the expertise and voluntary endeavours of Dr Colin Walker.

B. Carrier State Studies:

Dr Colin Walker recently posted on his website; "It appears as if the period that Rota virus is carried by surviving birds after infection is between 9 and 15 weeks."

Dr Walker also cautioned that; "We must be careful in extrapolating results when only a comparatively small number of birds have been tested." Also adding that; "There is the potential for a very low number of birds to carry the virus for much longer." Further longitudinal studies are required.

C. Period of Immunity Post-Infection:

Dr Walker noted that a small number of lofts in WA that were infected in May and June of 2016 reported reinfections recently in 2017. Dr Walker is of the view therefore that the period of immunity post infection is likely to be around 10 months. This means that birds will need to be vaccinated for rotavirus annually. Further longitudinal studies are required.

D. Continued spread of Rotavirus:

Since the ANRPB March Press Release both South Australia (SA) and Queensland (Qld) have experienced considerable outbreaks of the Rota virus.

The reported mortality rates in SA was generally between 6% and 15% and in Qld the reported mortality rate has been even lower (although there have been some reports from Qld where the mortality rate has been much higher).

This has led to speculation that the virus may be weakening, or that there may be different strains of the virus circulating. Dr Colin Walker has arranged, via Dr Adrian

www.anrpb.org

Australian National Racing Pigeon Board Inc.
enquiries@anrpb.org



Gallagher in Brisbane, for tissue samples from 3 birds to be sent to AgriBio in Vic for cloacal and liver PCR testing. Dr Walker will post the results on his website as soon as they are available.

3. Racing in 2017:

The ANRPB has, in previous Press Releases, made its position clear on racing in 2017. The ANRPB reiterates its recommendation that from a pigeon welfare perspective, all states, where there have been extensive outbreaks of the Rota virus, should suspend racing until a vaccine becomes available, possibly as early as August 2017.

The RSPCA in NSW recently issued a strong statement recommending that racing does not proceed until a vaccine becomes available. This RSPCA action was brought about by a Racing Pigeon Federation in Sydney seeking RSPCA endorsement for their planned Veterinarian supervised race program. The full RSPCA communique can be seen through the following link:

<https://www.rspcansw.org.au/images/mediarelease/2017/May/050517.pdf>

4. National Code of Practice:

The ANRPB has produced a Draft National Code of Practice for pigeon keeping and racing in Australia. This is an output from a request by Animal Health Australia (AHA) in Canberra.

Following a period of consultation and review the National Code of Practice will be approved by the Board for Australia wide implementation.

5. Social Media:

In the modern age social media plays an important role in communication, information sharing, and connecting pigeon fanciers across Australia. Members should endeavour to ensure that their comments are accurate and constructive in nature as offensive comments reflect poorly on the sport of pigeon racing.

www.anrpb.org

Australian National Racing Pigeon Board Inc.
enquiries@anrpb.org



6. ANRPB Inc. – New Secretary / Treasurer

We are pleased to welcome Mr. David Walker as the new ANRPB Inc. Secretary / Treasurer. David races in Hyde Park Club, flying with SAHPA, in Adelaide. David is a retired Engineer and has been an active pigeon flyer for the past 10 years and previously in show pigeons. David has held senior pigeon administration roles at Club and Federation level.

David takes over the Treasurer role from Grant Paterson – thank you Grant for your tremendous support and efforts and a job well done. The pigeon fraternity at large appreciates the life-long administrative works you have put in. Enjoy your well-deserved rest.

David takes over the Secretary role from Andrew Grech, from the Seven Hills Club, CCF, in Sydney. Andrew stepped in as Interim Secretary and undertook magnificently for the past year. Thank you Andrew for stepping-up and for making such a wonderful and positive contribution to the pigeon fancy and in support of the ANRPB.

7. Disease Management Fund – Rotavirus development donations.

As detailed on the ANRPB Inc. website last week, donations have reached \$57k of the \$60k target. This is a brilliant outcome – please see list of donors on the website. Thank you!

Yours sincerely

For and on behalf of the Australian National Racing Pigeon Board Incorporated.

Stephen Eggleton
Chair - ANRPB Inc.

This update drafted by Dr Colin Walker & Dr Mark White (Section 1, joint announcement), Stephen Eggleton, Greg Kakoschke and approved by ANRPB Inc.

www.anrpb.org

Australian National Racing Pigeon Board Inc.
enquiries@anrpb.org