

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) ROTAVAX

Is Rotavax a killed vaccine?

Yes Rotavax is a killed vaccine. There are no live elements in it.

Is Rotavax safe?

So far there are no reports of any safety issues. Pigeons seem to tolerate the vaccine quite well.

When is it safe to exercise the birds after training?

We are still gaining experience with this. So far it doesn't seem to be necessary to rest them for more than a day or two. But fliers need to observe their own birds and make common sense decisions about the return to loft flying.

Does Rotavax pose any risk to human health?

The vaccine contains some oil and this can be irritant if accidentally injected into humans. That's particularly so if injected near a knuckle joint, as the swelling in a confined space can put pressure on nerves and blood vessels. However the type of oil used in Rotavax is relatively mild compared to other vaccines. Moreover a prick with the needle without actually injecting some vaccine into the flesh doesn't generally cause any problem other than slight soreness for a few days. If accidental injection occurs follow the label directions and see a doctor. Apart from the oil none of the other components of the vaccine have known human health risks associated with them at this time.

Is Rotavax effective?

It's too early to be sure. The university that carried out the early stage research work did only limited studies in this area. The vaccine has been approved by the government regulator with the caution that efficacy has not yet been determined. If we waited to investigate efficacy thoroughly before supplying the vaccine it would take another couple of years or more to become available. However we will get some practical feel for its efficacy from feedback from its use in the field over time. We may get a chance to do some formal efficacy studies at a later date.

Can vaccinated birds still carry the virus?

Yes. The vaccine is designed to stop the birds getting sick. But it doesn't stop pigeons becoming silent carriers of the virus. Therefore vaccinated birds that mix with other birds which are carrying the virus could still become infected. Subsequently those infected vaccinated pigeons could bring the virus home to their loft and spread it to unvaccinated loft-mates. However the amount of virus particles they spread around would likely be much less than that spread by recovering unvaccinated sick birds. Not many vaccines completely stop animals from carrying the pathogen. PMV was spread to Sydney by healthy vaccinated pigeons.

What is the dose volume?

0.3 mL under the skin.

Where should the vaccine be given?

In the loose skin of the back of neck or the inner thigh, as for PMV.

What is the vaccination program?

The program is similar to PMV. Not previously vaccinated birds: two doses 3-6 weeks apart. Birds vaccinated in the previous year: one annual booster

How long does it take for immunity to occur after the second shot?

It's too early to be sure as the university did only limited work in this area. We think it takes about 1-2 weeks. However this hasn't been thoroughly tested scientifically.

Is there any immunity from the first shot only?

It's possible there is a little bit of protective immunity from the first shot. But generally speaking most of the protection with this type of vaccine comes from the second shot.

What is the duration of immunity?

It's not really known for sure at this stage. We are hoping it lasts until the annual booster shot given the next year, but will have to keep an eye on this until we get more experience with using the vaccine in the field. There is no adverse effect from giving an earlier booster shot if required.

Can Rotavax be given at the same time as PMV and/or Pigeon Pox vaccine?

It's not really known for sure at this stage. We think it's safer to separate the Rotavax from other vaccinations by at least a week for the time being, until we get more experience with using it.

Can Rotavax and PMV be mixed and given as one injection?

We don't recommend this. The total dose volume of 0.8 mL is too big for a pigeon. The two vaccines use different oils that may not be compatible. We don't know to what extent each vaccine interferes with the action of the other.

Does Rotavax need to be kept cold during administration?

No the vaccine only needs to be kept cold during long term storage. There is nothing wrong with it warming up to moderate temperatures (say in the 20 degrees) while using it. Bear in mind that after being injected into the bird it warms up to pigeon temperature anyway.

Can leftover vaccine be put back in the fridge and used later?

Yes but with great care. Good sterile technique needs to be used at all times. Only un-used sterile needles should be used to puncture the rubber stopper in order to remove vaccine from the packs. Guns should be cleaned between uses, according to the manufacturer's directions. If handled properly, partially used packs can go back into the fridge after use and be kept for the second shot. But we don't recommend that partially used packs are carried over to the following year.

What packs sizes are available?

100 dose and 1,000 dose packs are available.

How should Rotavax be stored?

The vaccine should be stored in the fridge. DO NOT FREEZE.

What is the expiry?

18 months from the date of manufacture.