



# THE AUSTRALIAN PIGEON CENTRE

*“Where Passion takes Flight”*

## **Barley is a great food for Racing Pigeons, keeping weight off and maintaining racing condition**

By Barry Trewin

Barley is indeed considered a beneficial food for racing pigeons when it comes to maintaining their weight and supporting their racing condition. Racing pigeons require a balanced diet that provides them with the necessary nutrients and energy for optimal performance. Barley is a grain that offers several advantages in this regard.

Firstly, barley is a good source of carbohydrates, which are essential for providing energy to racing pigeons during their intense physical activities. The complex carbohydrates found in barley are slowly digested, ensuring a steady release of energy over an extended period. This can help pigeons sustain their energy levels during long-distance races.

Secondly, barley has a relatively low fat content compared to other grains, which can be advantageous for maintaining a lean body weight in racing pigeons. It can help prevent excessive weight gain and ensure that the birds are in an optimal racing condition. Managing weight is crucial because excess body weight can hinder a pigeon's speed and endurance during races.

Additionally, barley is rich in dietary fibre, which aids in digestion and promotes a healthy digestive system in racing pigeons. A well-functioning digestive system is essential for efficient nutrient absorption and overall bird health.

When feeding barley to racing pigeons, it is important to complement it with other essential components of a balanced diet, such as quality pigeon pellets, vitamins, minerals, and fresh water. Variety in the diet is also crucial to ensure pigeons receive a wide range of nutrients.

It's worth noting that individual pigeons may have specific dietary requirements and preferences, so it's essential to monitor their performance, weight, and overall health when introducing or modifying their diet. Consulting with an avian veterinarian or experienced pigeon fanciers can provide valuable guidance on optimising a racing pigeon's diet for peak performance.

Incorporating barley into a racing pigeon's diet can be done in various ways. One common approach is to mix barley with other grains like corn, wheat, or peas to create a well-rounded feed mixture. This mixture can be offered to pigeons either dry or moistened, depending on their preference and feeding habits.

Some pigeon fanciers prefer to sprout barley before feeding it to their racing pigeons. Sprouting involves soaking the barley seeds in water and allowing them to germinate. Sprouted barley is considered more nutritious as it enhances the availability of vitamins and minerals while increasing digestibility. Pigeons often find sprouted grains more palatable as well.

It's important to note that while barley is beneficial for racing pigeons, it should not be the sole component of their diet. Pigeons require a diverse range of nutrients for optimal health and

performance. High-quality pigeon pellets, which are specifically formulated to meet their nutritional needs, should also be an integral part of their diet.

Fresh fruits and vegetables can provide additional vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. These can be offered as occasional treats or mixed into the feed to add variety and encourage foraging behaviour.

Water is an essential component of a racing pigeon's diet. Clean, fresh water should be readily available at all times, especially during training and racing periods. Pigeons can become dehydrated quickly, so it's crucial to monitor their water intake and ensure they have access to clean water sources.

Lastly, it's essential to observe the pigeons' overall condition, behaviour, and performance regularly. Any changes in weight, droppings, or behaviour may indicate an imbalance in their diet or underlying health issues. Consulting with avian experts or experienced pigeon fanciers can provide valuable insights and help ensure that racing pigeons receive the best nutrition and care possible.

Remember, each pigeon is unique, and it may require some trial and error to find the optimal diet that suits their individual needs. With proper nutrition and care, racing pigeons can maintain their weight, condition, and endurance, ultimately enhancing their performance in races.

### **Barley with the husk still on the grain.**

Indeed, barley with the husk still intact can provide additional benefits for racing pigeons. The husk, or outer layer, of barley grains contains dietary fibre, which aids in maintaining a healthy gut and digestion in pigeons. The fibre acts as a natural cleanser, promoting regular bowel movements and preventing issues like constipation.

Including barley with the husk in a pigeon's diet can help support the overall digestive health of the birds. The fibre content helps regulate the passage of food through the digestive system, enhancing nutrient absorption and reducing the risk of digestive disturbances.

However, it's important to note that excessive consumption of barley with the husk can lead to watery droppings in pigeons. The high fibre content, combined with inadequate water intake, can result in loose or watery droppings. This can be an indication of an imbalance in the pigeon's diet or inadequate hydration.

To prevent issues with watery droppings, it's crucial to strike a balance when feeding barley with the husk. Offering a moderate amount of barley with the husk and ensuring an adequate supply of fresh water can help maintain proper hydration and prevent digestive discomfort.

As always, monitoring the pigeons' droppings, weight, and overall condition is essential to gauge their response to the diet. Adjustments can be made accordingly to optimise their nutrition and maintain a healthy gut.

### **Brown Rice can be a substitute for Barley**

Yes, brown rice can indeed serve as a substitute for barley in a racing pigeon's diet. Like barley, brown rice is a whole grain that offers several nutritional benefits. While there are some differences between the two, brown rice can provide similar advantages when it comes to maintaining weight and supporting racing condition in pigeons.

Brown rice is also a good source of carbohydrates, which are essential for providing energy to racing pigeons during their physical activities. Although the carbohydrate composition of

brown rice differs slightly from barley, it can still offer a steady release of energy to sustain pigeons during races.

When substituting barley with brown rice, it's important to consider the differences in cooking or preparation methods. Brown rice typically requires longer cooking times and more water compared to barley. It's recommended to thoroughly cook brown rice before feeding it to pigeons to ensure optimal digestibility and nutrient availability.

As with any dietary changes, it's crucial to monitor the pigeons' response and performance when introducing brown rice. Some birds may adjust well to the substitution, while others may require a gradual transition or may not respond favourably. Monitoring their weight, energy levels, and overall health can help determine if brown rice is a suitable substitute for barley in their specific case.

Remember that maintaining a balanced diet is key, so it's important to ensure that the brown rice substitute is accompanied by other essential components of a racing pigeon's diet, such as pigeon pellets, vitamins, minerals, and fresh water. Providing variety and ensuring a well-rounded nutritional intake will help support the pigeons' overall health and racing performance.

If you have concerns about the pigeon's droppings or any digestive issues, it's advisable to consult with avian experts or experienced pigeon fanciers. They can provide guidance specific to your pigeons' needs and help ensure their digestive health is maintained while incorporating barley or brown rice into their diet.