

Is corn? Is Corn? Is Corn?

Corn is an important ingredient in a pigeon's diet. While it is reduced or entirely removed during the extreme heat of the summer months, it's generally incorporated in the feed about nine months of the year in the northern half of the U.S. Because it is such a common dietary staple, we sometimes take for granted that corn is corn no matter where we live or where we buy it. So to stretch our feed budget, we just buy it when and where it's the cheapest. Is that wise? Maybe we're barely getting what we pay for and not taking into account the more important aspect - The health of our birds.

We may live and work day-in and day- out in the heart of the corm belt and still not realize the many factors that determine the nutritional value of corn (or any grain) in any given crop year. Firstly, the soil itself- the moisture, tilth, fertility, temperature, and microbiological activity - determines the time it takes to germinate and emerge. Once the tender corn seedling is up and growing, the amount of direct sunlight, moisture, air and soil temperatures, and available plant food and micro-minerals all combine to determine the rate of growth and plant vigor. At the same, weeds, insect pests, fungal diseases, severe weather, and hungry wild animals threaten the feed-value of the corn crop. After the mature crop is harvested, too high moisture content, molds, grain weevils and insect Larva, as well as rodents can quickly lower the nutritional content of the grain. Sometimes even apparently good looking corn with good test weight and safe moisture readings at the grain elevator will show disappointing levels of protein, fat, or toxin levels in laboratory analysis. And while the latter figures seldom raise concerns when corn is used industrial use (such as ethanol). It certainly has detrimental consequences to the health and constitution of those eating it - Humans or animals.

The worlds' largest seed companies are striving to increase yields (bushels per acre) any way they can. Including genetically modifying the see to try to achieve the end. Ironically, the actual nutritional value of the corn produced has gone down, especially the last 20 years. Furthermore, at least 90% of the corn planted these few years is GMO (Genetically Modified Organism).

So the pertinent question is - do I know the source of my corn and do I know the nutritional value of the corn I'm feeding? If not, am I buying from a trustworthy source who is sampling and analyzing the corn to be sure it meets or exceeds nutritional standards?

Stan Holt

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