



No short cuts on feeding

Although compound feed prices may be a bit lower than 12 months ago, they are still riding high and represent a large part of the rearing costs. SCA NuTec's nutritionist Joanne Peacock warns producers not to take short cuts and not to stop feeding a complete feed too early.



Joanne Peacock

When feed prices are high it is often tempting to look for alternative ways to feed pheasants and to cut back on a complete pelleted feed, particularly when the potential cost reduction may look attractive.

A word of warning though – this is likely to be false economy. Whilst it might be tempting to feed just wheat during the winter months, even released poults need a balanced supply of protein, energy, minerals and vitamins to grow well and be successful breeding birds. This balance is not available through feeding grain on its own.

A study published in the Journal of Poultry Science in 2002 showed that when pheasants were housed in release pens with access to natural plant food, birds

fed a high protein pelleted feed gained more weight than those only fed grain.

Ideally pheasant chicks need to be fed each of the diets in sufficient quantities to achieve optimum growth and feed conversion. Moving through the range too quickly and onto grower pellets at an earlier stage may not make any savings.

Each formulation provides a correct balance of protein, energy and nutrients to meet the bird's demands at particular growth stages. The danger of moving through these too quickly is that these requirements are not met. This leads to reduced growth rates, problems with feathering and general morbidity, particularly in low temperatures in the middle of winter.

Body condition is vital. In the depths of winter pheasants need sufficient fat reserves to survive. And insufficient body condition in females will have a detrimental effect on egg production in the following spring.

The importance of vitamin and mineral nutrition cannot be underestimated either. Whilst it is well known that calcium and phosphorus are critical in diets to maintain bone strength and integrity, the body also needs vitamins, albeit in small quantities, to function correctly and make best use of nutrients. Feeding a complete feed ensures these needs are met.

The recommended feeding regime is to include a good quality, balanced complete feed from

day old chicks. This feed can be combined with grain once the poults have been released and are nearly mature size and have adapted to their environment.

Following this regime avoids too much reliance on pelleted feed and ensures that the bird becomes adapted to 'wild' food and develops foraging behaviour.

The SCA Gameplan range includes gamefeed rations that have been designed to provide:

- Balanced amino acids.
- Vitamin and mineral levels tailored to meet the pheasant's requirements.
- Only the highest quality raw materials.

It is therefore important to get the balance right between complete feed and grain to ensure you get the best from the birds.

Feed prices 2009

The problems in the world financial markets are affecting feed costs and causing significant volatility in protein prices, particularly soya and cereals.

The lack of confidence in pound sterling and the exchange rate slide against the US dollar and the Euro has led to significant and sudden rises in the import prices of soya beans. On top of this are the droughts in Argentina in December and January that caused concerns with yield predictions.

Home grown wheat, on the other hand, has become more attractive to export particularly to Europe with the strong Euro and this has meant a sudden jump in farm gate prices post Christmas – but not as dramatic as that seen early in 2008. At the time of writing, game farmers and rearers should see some price discounts compared with a year ago.

SCA Gameplan Range

Code	Product Name	Protein (%)	Product Form	Age Guide	Details
901	Superfine Crumbs	25	Fine Crumbs	0-5 days	Aimed at ensuring the best start in life. They contain an ideal balance of amino acids for optimal health and growth.
902	Starter Crumbs	25	Standard Crumbs	2-21 days	
903	Mini Pellets	25	1.8mm Pellets	2-21 days	Aimed at easing the transition onto Grower pellets.
904	Grower N°1 (Pheasant)	23	2.8mm Pellets	3-5 weeks	Formulated to ensure chicks continue to reach their growth potential.
907	Grower N°1 (Partridge)	23	2.4mm Pellets	3-5 weeks	
905	Grower N°2 (Pheasant)	20	2.8mm Pellets	5-10 weeks	Maintains growth & fitness when used as a follow on diet to Grower No 1 or as a grower diet for bought in poults.
908	Grower N°2 (Partridge)	20	2.4mm Pellets	5-10 weeks	
906	Poult	16	2.8mm Pellets	9 weeks onwards	Aimed at maintaining health and fitness whilst preparing the bird for its natural habitat. This ration can also be used as a maintenance ration or pre-breeder diet.
900	Pheasant Breeder	18	3.2mm Pellets	4 weeks pre-lay, duration of lay	High density diets for fit, healthy birds ensuring maximum egg laying and hatchability.
909	Partridge Breeder	20	2.4mm Pellets		
876	Wildfowl Breeder	17	2.8mm Pellets		
913	Wildfowl Starter Crumbs	20	Standard Crumbs	0-4 weeks	Formulated to contain an ideal balance of amino acids to aid optimal growth and health.

The SCA Gameplan bags are colour coded to make the different products easily recognisable (pin this page up as a reference in your feed store)

Further products

Naturclean

A dry powder bedding conditioner and drying agent. Creates a dry, safe, healthy environment by reducing moisture and thus the potential for bacterial infection. Available in 25kg bags.

Working Dog Food

SCA Shepherdess working dog food is formulated to meet the nutritional requirements of young, active or working dogs.

Aguacid

A blend of organic acids to be used in the drinking water as an aid to promote gut health. Available in 20-litre drums.

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Global resources....local support

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