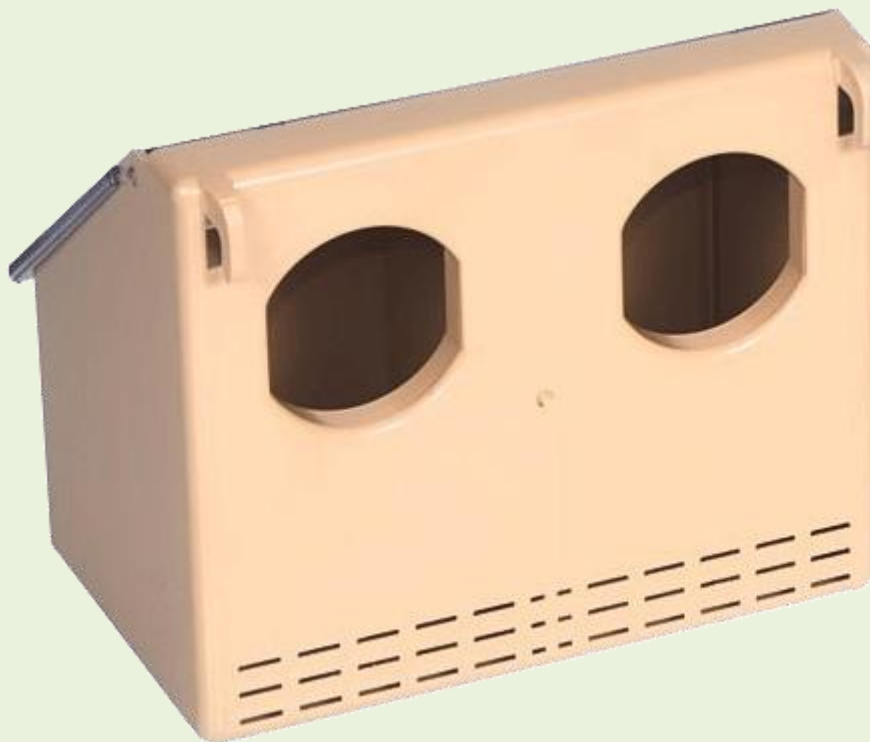


Waste Economy

One thing concerning me for some time is the amount of food just thrown about and wasted by pigeons rearing young. This can happen at any stage of life of course, as they sort one seed from another simply tossing aside those that they do not favour, but it is more of a problem while feeding young as they have a greater selection before them. Food being tossed around in this way has several potentially harmful effects first it can become contaminated by droppings before being eaten by other members of the loft or it can be left to attract vermin and perhaps most of all in these times of rapidly escalating food prices it can be very expensive.



My first effort to reduce this wastage was simple and effective; I cut a hole in the side of an empty drinks carton and used that as the feeder. This makes the bird put its head into the carton to get at the food,

which they readily do, and while this does not limit the amount of picking, pecking and tossing aside that they do it does ensure any grains being thrown around are retained within the carton and thus eliminates almost all waste. This has worked quite well for me but recently I saw a manufactured two hole feeder, that is two compartments with one hole in each, based on this same design so I tried a few and now I am completely converted.



The same principal applies an enclosed feeder which retains the grain with a hole for the bird to put its head through but this new feeder has several features which score highly over my home made effort. First it has a hinged transparent lid so that you can easily see the contents and lift to refill, then it has two integral hooks so that it can hang on the outside of a conventional nest box front and finally it is made from a

rigid plastic so it is very easy to clean and maintain. Hanging it on the front both saves space inside the nest box and makes it easier to clean, check and re-fill. All in all this is a superb piece of equipment made by the Spanish company [Gaun S.A.](#), manufactures of livestock equipment and pet products, who make this feeder in one, two, three and four hole versions as well as a whole range of other feeders and drinkers, a few of which I will refer to here.

I said various other feeders and drinkers well yes they do a whole range of conventional equipment for poultry, pigeons and other pets and livestock but what has interested me most is automatic drinking systems. I have now used a simple automatic drinking system for some time and found it very practical. Frankly I found constantly refilling drinkers quite a chore and as I also like to keep the water chlorinated to reduce cross infection when I first saw a simple automatic system I jumped at it. There are now numerous types of drinkers on the market but one of Gaun's designs again caught my eye and I have now used it for a few weeks with young birds, from weaning, and they have taken to it quite well. If the babies can use it then so can they all and it really is so very simple and economic.



The drinker itself consists of a small bright yellow plastic cup, so it is easily seen, and sticking down inside the cup is a small stainless steel pin which the birds beak must touch as it puts its head to the drinker and when it does the slight movement of the pin causes water to flow. The advantage I feel this drinker has over some others, which rely on the weight of a small volume of water in the drinker to cut off supply, is that there is no water waiting around to attract dirt, dust and contamination. There will of course be dirt and dust around and so a regular wipe is highly recommended but the water is only delivered on demand so very small amounts are exposed at any one time. Yes you are right these will not work at all at some stages of winter when it is very cold but I have been surprised at how few days this actually is. It really needs to go down to about -4 for the water supply to stop but this does vary with the degree of exposure and so on. For those few days you can return to the older style drinkers although I use my own upturned bottle method which again I find more practical.



Two other types of drinker.

So how do you fix up a water supply, well again this is very simple as there are numerous small tanks available for the purpose connected to

the drinkers via 10mm tube. All that you need do is find a suitable site and height for the tank; it needs to be slightly above the height of all drinkers in order to create the pressure for supply, in an easily accessible place to refill and out of direct sunlight to prevent warming. The tube, which is easily cut with a sharp knife, can then be run around the drinkers

All of these items are available in this country from [Wheatcroft Poultry](#), Cotswold Rise, Hoo Lane, Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire GL55 6EN Tel: Sales: 01386 841109. I must point out that as these are manufactured in Spain they can only be shipped to the UK economically as part of a bulk order, which makes regular supply a little difficult. So if you are interested I suggest you get on to Wheatcroft Poultry and let them know so that they can consider making an order, I have already told them that I will need another 20 or so feeders and I am still thinking about how many drinkers.

Nigel Lane