

NEWCOMERS PAGES

YOUR OWN "FAMILY" of RACING PIGEONS

From the very beginning of your taking up the sport of Pigeon Racing you should have your goal set on developing your own "family" of pigeons. A "family" that not only has the best available blood-line but whose needs of management fit into your own ways, life-style and other commitments.

Almost every new flyer has wondered, among other things, where he should buy his foundation stock, and whether they should be Old Birds or Young Birds. Should he obtain birds from one man only, or from several? In a successful loft the birds are usually all of one 'family'. That is, they are all descended from a few common ancestors and are thus all related to each other in one way or another. Their owner has probably spent many years establishing this family. He has improved it over the years, by carefully selecting his breeding pairs, and by rigorous testing of their progeny in the race basket. If the pedigrees of the birds were examined, it would probably be found that there are winners in each generation, and that the successful fancier has bred winner from winners, which were themselves bred out of winners.

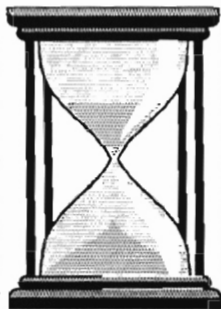
The owner of a loft of pigeons such as these does not have to depend on one or two birds to win

for him. He has many good pigeons capable of winning. He has concentrated the desirable qualities by generations of planned matings, and has purified the blood. There is one old saying,

It would be foolish for the beginner to think that he could improve on the work of a really successful fancier until he has gained some experience. Therefore he should obtain birds from one man only. Were he to purchase pigeons from several fanciers and pair them together, he would be destroying much of the good work done by each of those successful fanciers.

Perhaps the beginner should decide to purchase six or eight youngsters from his selected flyer, who should be a winner year after year, and preferably live locally or within easy visiting distance. No fancier who is racing can afford to part with his best racers or stock birds, except at a very high price. Also, no fancier will part with his best youngsters. At the end of the breeding season it is possible to purchase late bred youngsters, at no great cost, and these will make an ideal foundation stock. But (and this cannot be over-emphasised), they must all be from the one successful fancier.

You may be sure that fanciers do not sell their good pigeons un-



less it is a clearance sale and, in these sales, the really good birds often fetch very high prices. Sometimes one sees an advertisement which reads, 'Proven Stock Birds for sale. I have enough from them', but if the birds offered were breeding winners, their owner could never have 'enough from them'.

Tell the fancier of your choice that you intend to keep the late-bred youngsters for stock. He will then (if he is genuine) take great pains to pick youngsters which will have the best chance of breeding winners. Those which are truly representative of his family. You cannot do better than leave the selection to him. Having procured your youngsters at about 24 to 26 days old, you should be able to take them home, confident that you have put one foot very firmly on the ladder which leads to the top. Providing you do as you have promised, and keep the birds for stock, you will always be able to return for another pair at a later date and, if you manage them correctly, you will have just as good a chance of producing winners the following year as the established fancier from whom you have purchased the Young Birds.

The following season the birds should be paired at the beginning of Spring (on a sunny day), and two or three rounds of youngsters reared from each pair. Some useful advice on which bird to mate to which can often be obtained from the flyer you bought them from. With luck, you should then have a dozen or so youngsters with which to fly the Young Bird program. These should

be carefully trained and raced to a distance of about a hundred miles. The best six or eight should then be stopped and allowed to rest and moult. You are then assured of having a small team of yearlings to race in old birds.

The establishment of your own family is at least a four-year task, and the new flyer must be prepared to enter only a small team for the first season or two. If, after a year or so, it is found that one pair is breeding winners, it would seem to be common sense to keep that pair together, but otherwise the pairs can be changed each year amongst the original pigeons, and also these original birds can be paired to the younger birds bred by the new fancier himself.

This pairing of birds within the family, is known as 'line-breeding'. And if the relationships are really close, that is brother to sister, or father to daughter, it is called 'inbreeding'. If you have a German Shephard and you wish to breed another like it, you would not mate it to a Boxer. In the same way, there is always a better chance of producing winners from a winner, by pairing that winner to a bird from the same family.

It is true that many winners are produced out of a direct cross. That is when two unrelated birds are paired together. But the products of the cross themselves very rarely produce winners, unless they are mated to a relation on one side of the family. If this product of a cross is paired to an unrelated pigeon, that is out-crossed again, the

qualities of the original pigeon have been lost and dispersed. After a direct cross, such as has been describe above, it does not matter how close the relation is to which the progeny is paired.

It has often been said that such close 'in-breeding' should be avoided. Many people hold this opinion on religious or moral grounds. After all we humans are not allowed to marry very close blood relations. But in-breeding has the effect of purifying the blood. It concentrates the good qualities of the common ancestor, and also the bad qualities, where they are present. Therefore we may produce a super pigeon by pairing a champion to his daughter but, on the other hand, we may be unfortunate and breed an inferior specimen. But this does not matter with pigeons. We can get rid of the bird or, alternatively, it will be lost in a race. We should not, then, be afraid of arranging a close mating occasionally, although it should certainly not be indulged in for several successive generations, for this may result in loss of stamina.

Line-breeding, however, can be practised for many generations with distinct benefit to the stock. Such matings as grandsire to granddaughter (or great granddaughter), uncle to niece, half-brother to half-sister, come into this category. This method of arranging matings, so that the 'blood' of the important ancestor appears on both sides of the pedigree, is the one which in my opinion is most likely to produce winners.

The mating of full brother to full sister does not appear to me to

serve any useful purpose. It does not aim to reproduce either the father or the mother of these two birds, and the cock may have inherited entirely different qualities from his parents from those of his sister.

Consequently, in deciding which bird to pair to which, we should work on two main principles, namely (1) pair the best to the best and hope to produce something better than either parent, or (2) try to reproduce a champion pigeon already in existence by carefully line or in-breeding.

In Europe, fanciers always seem to have many more stock pigeons which are kept solely for breeding purposes than we do. This is because most of them only fly on the Widowhood System, and therefore cannot breed a second round of squeakers from their racers, as we can, flying on the Natural System. We often find, that by the time we realise we have bred a champion, we have lost its parents.

There is a lesson to be learned from this. We must always be on the look-out for a potential breeder of winners. And as soon as we have found this pigeon, - be it cock or hen, - it must be immediately pulled out of the race team, and put into stock. We must be prepared to forgo any success which that pigeon might achieve in the racing and build for the future.

Pigeons which consistently breed winners every year are worth their weight in gold. And the sooner in their life that their merit can be recognised, the more years will be available for it to be used. It is far

better to stop a breeder of winners from racing in the prime of its life, and put it to stock, than to wait until it is too old to race. Even the best old pigeon can be lost in an effort to extract one more winning performance from it and in addition, the youngsters it would have bred, had it remained in the loft for a number of years in well-earned retirement, are lost for ever.

This is one of the best ways of ensuring that, once we have reached the top, we stay there. We can always go back to square one and, after having steadily climbed the ladder of success, do not suddenly find ourselves at the bottom again.

Providing they maintain their health and vitality, there is no reason why good stock pigeons should not continue to produce winners for many years. I have two old cocks (one 15 and other 14) which are still breeding winners. The elder of the two is just beginning to show his age, but the other has all the energy of a two year old. Some top fanciers, but not all by any means, believe that old stock pigeons don't produce winners, but rather produce producers.

Just as cattle breeders try to improve the quality of their beef herds and the milk yield of their cows, so we must, by careful selection and well-thought-out matings, endeavour to improve the racing ability of our pigeons. As the years go by, if we are successful in our efforts, we shall find that we are losing less birds, and that we are breeding a greater percentage of good pigeons. Also, we shall dis-

cover that our birds are breeding true to type, and that certain pigeons appear in the pedigrees of nearly all of them. In fact, we have achieved what we set out to do, and have 'Developed a Family'.

RACECALC

for

Federations

(up to 10,00 flyers & 999 RacePoints)

Automatic Aggregate Calculation

Ring Register Incorporated at Extra

Cost

or

Sold Separately

RACECALC

for

Individual Clubs

Pigeon Racing Result and General
Race Management Programs

"There has never been
anything like this until
now".

Phone Bill Wells (03) 583-3867

**RACING PIGEON
SOFTWARE**

(c) Copyright 1992/93