

Pigeon Notes

By Vin Blonden

The Ideal Racing Loft

Most books on pigeon racing available for purchase here come from England and America, and many of the loft designs are not suitable for Australian conditions.

Lofts planned for colder climates are too snug for the Australian heat and can become ovens during the summer months.

However, designs of trapping systems and interior fittings, such as nest boxes and perches, can be useful to the novice when planning his loft.

The most important factors to consider when erecting the loft are sunshine and fresh air. To provide the first essential, the loft should face north-east to allow for ample sunlight in the front of the structure during the winter months.

Second preferences are east and north respectively.

To ensure that the birds obtain plenty of air, the loft should be completely open across the front, and open top and bottom at the sides and back.

Sunshine and air in abundance are the two most important factors required for the housing of a healthy flock.

Without them, diseases are prevalent.

Materials

The best materials to use are timber, asbestolite and wire-netting. Asbestolite is preferred to iron because it does not "sweat" during frosty and dewy nights.

Moisture dripping all over the floor from an iron roof is eliminated if corrugated asbestolite is used.

Flat asbestolite sheeting should be used to cover the back and sides.

Apart from the open flights which can protrude from the front of the loft, the main portion used to house the birds should be no less than six feet deep.

The roof should slope to the back and be of sufficient height to eliminate stooping when moving about the interior of the loft.

Four feet deep asbestolite sheets provide ample protection on the back and sides.

If the back of the loft is six feet high, the flat asbestolite walling should be centred to allow a ventilation gap of one foot top and bottom, if the height is five feet, the ventilation gap is six inches top and bottom.

The gaps should be covered with half-inch wire netting, and if possible, louvres should be fitted along the bottom to prevent the birds from seeing the odd stray cat or dog which may run along the back of the loft.

Enough overhang of the roof should be allowed for to ensure rain does not beat in at the top of the back and sides.

If louvres are not used at the bottom, an iron flashing to run the water away should be fixed to the timber framework at the bottom of the back and sides before the asbestolite walls are nailed into place.

These precautions must be taken if the housing portion of the loft is to be kept dry.

Planning

When planning the breeding section, it is a good idea to have three compartments, one large division to cater for the breeding boxes in the centre, and one smaller compartment at each side.

If this is done, the surplus cocks and hens can still be kept apart during the breeding season. If the loft extends along a side fence, the breeding section should be furthest away from the back door of the fancier's home.

So that plenty of exercise can be given breeders, a long flight should extend out from the breeding section, and if the far end of the loft is used for the breeders, the flight will not restrict the view of the landing board and traps from the back door.

If ordinary lengths of flooring board are fitted to the end and sides of the flight (about 18 inches from the top), they will provide ideal shelves on which the breeders can "sun" themselves.

The racing section of the loft should also comprise three compartments with the smaller one in the centre.

The trapping system should be fitted to the centre one which can be closed off from the two larger sections on training and race days.

If the centre is left empty of other birds on these occasions, those entering the loft can eat and drink without disturbance from the other inmates.

The release doors of the racing loft should be fitted to both larger sections at each side of the smaller centre compartment so that the birds can only leave the loft from the two sections.

If this is done, entrance to the loft via the centre portion can be gained by the fancier, without fear of his pigeons attempting to escape for exercise when the centre door is opened.

Injury

Pigeons trained to leave the loft for exercise when certain doors are opened will try to do so if the owner attempts to enter the loft via an exit door and birds can be injured if they crash into a door which is opened and hurriedly closed.

Release doors should open completely from top to bottom so that the birds have the whole of the front of the compartment available for their escape.

The drop-down door, which allows escape over the top part of the front only, should not be used, as many a broken heel has resulted when birds crash into the rail in their enthusiasm for exercise.

Ordinary wooden battens are preferable to wire mesh to make the dividing partitions of the loft interior, but half-inch wire netting should be used to cover the whole of the flight and the exterior doors.

Damage to feathers can result when birds try to get from one compartment to another if wire is used in the interior of the loft.

The use of the small mesh wire on all exterior openings is essential if sparrows are to be kept outside of the loft.

In many cases, sparrows are carriers of disease, lice and mite.