

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HOMING PIGEON ASSOCIATION

INCORPORATED

CODE OF PRACTICE

FOR THE

KEEPING AND RACING OF

PIGEONS

14th March - 2004

Prepared by:

The S.A.H.P.A. Inc.
Management Committee

Preface

This Code was produced by the South Australian Homing Pigeon Association Incorporated, herein referred to as the SAHPA Inc., or the Association, for the welfare of pigeons. All member clubs, and affiliates, are bound by the requirements of this Code. It must be studied carefully, and is to be read in conjunction with the Constitution and By-Laws of the SAHPA Inc.

Pigeon owners, who are not members of the SAHPA Inc., or affiliated clubs, are therefore not bound by this document. The SAHPA Inc. cannot be held responsible for any actions, or behaviours, by non-members of the SAHPA Inc., or its' affiliated clubs.

The principal purpose of this Code of Practice is to ensure the welfare of the pigeons is the prime consideration in all activities associated with their racing, breeding and management.

This Code provides the minimum acceptable standards of:

Housing and environmental factors affecting health

Racing and training practices; especially as they affect the chances of an individual pigeon returning safely, to its loft.

Transport of pigeons to races and training flights.

Control measures to enhance the ability of a pigeon to return safely to its loft.

A breach of the Code will constitute an offence and may jeopardise your Membership.

A breach of this Code will constitute an offence under the regulations pursuant to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1985.

POLICY

Under the broad umbrella of pigeon welfare, the SAHPA identifies certain aspects and practices which are inherent to the operation of this Code of Practice.

The Racing Pigeon is a domestic animal and occupies an appropriate place alongside other domesticated species, within the general Australian Community.

Notwithstanding the need for adequate exercise required to enhance the health and performance of the racing pigeon, as a domestic animal the Racing Pigeon should be regulated sufficiently to ensure its place within the urban community environment.

On this basis, certain over-riding factors are evident.

- a) The Racing Pigeon should be exercised daily, sufficient to ensure its fitness for the purpose intended.
With the exception of birds owned by fanciers living away from built up metropolitan Housing Estates, or, for when pigeons are returning from racing and training, free flight exercise is to be on a planned basis. Duration typically from 30 - 90 minutes, and performed to a maximum of twice daily.
- b) Free non-flight time, at any time, is to be conducted under close supervision by the owner.
Other than for planned free flight and non-flight times, all racing pigeons are to be confined within their home loft.
Persistent fielding and/or roof sitting habits are prohibited.
- c) The Racing Pigeon shall be housed within a loft, designed to provide shelter and comfortable accommodation for its inhabitants, and built in such a manner as to ensure it does not negatively impact upon the amenity of the environment in which it is located.
Inherently, all racing pigeon lofts should be constructed in such a manner as to maintain the public dignity and image sought by the Pigeon Racing fraternity.
- d) The Association recognises, and accepts, its responsibility to foster new members who participate in the sport of racing pigeons and consider the interest of allowing new members to participate in the sport in a very modest capacity. Generally racing a small team of birds purchased as squeakers for the purpose of racing, - minimum sizes for racing lofts, from which birds are regularly released for exercise, may not be in the best interest of the member, or the sport. Junior members are especially encouraged, and it may not be practical or affordable for them to build or maintain large structures for the purpose of racing their generally small team.

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1. DUTY OF CARE TO PIGEONS

- 1.1 The SAHPA Inc., as a parent body for its member clubs and affiliates believe a person who owns, races or is responsible for the care of pigeons has a fundamental duty to take all reasonable steps to ensure the welfare of those pigeons. For the purposes of this Code, the owner of a pigeon shall be taken to be the person(s) who has entered the bird in a competition or, in the event that that pigeon is not currently racing, the person who is primarily responsible for the day to day management of that bird.
- 1.2 A member, or affiliate, having responsibility for the care or charge of a pigeon or pigeons, has a duty to take all reasonable measures to ensure the welfare of that pigeon or pigeons.

2. ILL TREATMENT OF PIGEONS

- 2.1 The SAHPA defines ill treatment of pigeons as wounding, mutilating, abusing, tormenting and torturing, wanton or malicious beating and causing unnecessary pain, neglect or suffering. These acts are considered by the SAHPA Inc. as unacceptable treatment to pigeons. Ill treatment is defined within the provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1985, to be any action or inaction which results in unnecessary or unreasonable pain, suffering or distress; the owner has a responsibility to provide the pigeon with adequate and appropriate food, water, shelter and exercise.
- 2.2 The SAHPA rules:
It is an offence to ill-treat any pigeon and substantiated cases are likely to jeopardise membership.
- 2.3 All SAHPA Inc. Members shall provide all care in accordance with the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

3. ACCEPTANCE AND INSPECTION OF PIGEONS FOR COMPETITION

- 3.1 The SAHPA acknowledges the depth of expertise for pigeon care available within each member and affiliate club from which can be provided, suitably experienced personnel for the inspection of pigeons submitted for competition. (Club Committee)
- 3.2 All pigeons will only be accepted by the Club Committee, on the grounds of sound health and physical well being, to successfully complete the journey set for the event.

- 3.3 Poor Health. Poor pigeon health can be described as symptoms such as general lassitude from obvious sickness, respiratory disease indicated by wheezing, sneezing, nasal and eye discharge (i.e. Chlamydia infection), Pigeon Pox lesions, and any other ailment to which pigeons are susceptible.
- 3.4 Neglect. Neglect can be described as the pigeon being presented in a soiled and generally dishevelled condition and/or harbouring external parasites.
- 3.5 Physical Impairment. Physical impairment is intended to cover any condition, which is likely to diminish the chances of a racing pigeon to successfully complete a set journey.

4. CARRIAGE AND CONVEYANCE OF PIGEONS

- 4.1 Container Specifications
 - 4.1.1 Configuration. A person responsible for the carriage of pigeons must ensure they are transported in a rectangular or square configuration pannier, allowing adequate air exchange at the sides and top and for the pigeons to freely view their outside surroundings. This allowance pertains to pigeons being conveyed for private training, organised training and/or racing, or for the conveyance of pigeons for any other purpose.
 - 4.1.2 Size of Containers. The SAHPA Inc. recognises private pigeon carry containers are constructed in many sizes to suit individual circumstances, such as vehicle configuration, and it is not intended to interfere with this freedom. Instead, the SAHPA Inc. set minimum space requirements per pigeon as follows.
 - 4.1.3 Height Allowance. The minimum height shall be 21 cm (210mm) and is exclusive of all wire and plastic mesh bottom inserts.
 - 4.1.4 Space per Pigeon. The space allowance per pigeon will vary according to the duration of transport, the distance of the race and whether provision has to be made to feed and water the pigeons *en route* and at the release site.
 - 4.1.5 Scope of Allowance. This allowance pertains to pigeons being conveyed in any basket used for private training, SAHPA Inc. training and/or racing, or for the conveyance of pigeons to the clubrooms for entry into competition.

4.2 Confinement Provisions.

A person conveying a pigeon must ensure the cages meet the following standards. The allowance is made on the following basis:

- 4.2.1 For Races of 500 kilometres or less from the – (Adelaide G.P.O.), allow a minimum of 200 cm² per pigeon per pannier.
- 4.2.2 For Races exceeding 500 kilometres, allow a minimum of 250 cm² per pigeon per pannier.

5. FEED AND WATER PROVISIONS UNDER RACE CONDITIONS

5.1 Short Journeys. There exists a balance between the need to feed and water the pigeons *en route* and at the release site, so to sustain reserves of energy to complete the journey, and the need to avoid the detrimental effect, of commencing a journey on a full crop. On this basis it is determined, that for up to 24 hours confinement, *en route*, involving an overnight journey, and the race is 500 kilometres or less – (Adelaide G.P.O.) Birds are to be watered as soon as practical once the destination has been reached.

5.2 **In all other Cases.** Where the confinement is expected to exceed 24 hours and/or the journey is in excess of 500 kilometres as described, provisions are to be made to feed and water the pigeons. In these circumstances, the Transporter must arrive at the release site by 1600 hours on the day before the event is to start at which time feed and water procedures are to commence. The feed is to remain in front of the pigeons for a minimum of one (1) hour and no more than three (3) hours, whereupon it must be withdrawn. The water shall remain available for the pigeons continuously until one hour before release, whereupon it shall be withdrawn.

5.2.1 **Supplementary Feed and Water.** Supplementary feed and water *en-route* is to apply by at least 1600 hours daily in the manner prescribed, if the journey time to the release site exceeds the 1600 hour provision for arrival time.

6. RACE AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES, COMPETITIONS, AND THE RELEASING OF PIGEONS FOR FLIGHT WHEN AWAY FROM THE HOME LOFTS.

6.1. Annual Programmed Fixtures.

6.1.1 The SAHPA Inc. will appoint annually a Release Officer and Official Liberator, who shall be presided over by the SAHPA Management Committee or General Secretary. These appointees and Officers are responsible for conducting the Annual Race Programme. Advice may be sought from the Release Officer and the Liberator when the Racing Programme is being framed

6.1.2 Responsibility. The Race Release Officer and the Liberator will have control over the welfare of the pigeons including their collection, transport and liberation from races. This shall be done with the view to contributing to the body of knowledge required to plan and arrange a successful racing season. Where necessary, advice shall be sought from these Officers should it become necessary to consider variation of a release point during mid season.

6.2 Race Controls.

6.2.1 Racing Associations

In general, pigeon races are conducted by Federations or Societies. Although the rules of these organisations are not binding in law, the cooperation of members with instructions and rules of the committees is generally in the best interest of the sport, the birds and other competitors.

Committees of such organisations are empowered by their members to cancel, postpone, or alter the race venues and direct the person responsible for the pigeons to make whatever adjustments are necessary for the welfare of the pigeons.

6.2.2 Releasing Birds.

The person who releases the pigeons must ensure the birds are released in such a manner as to avoid potential for injury.

He/she/they must consider weather, local conditions and any other factors which may impinge upon the ability of birds to successfully complete the event. Pigeon Racing Organizations may require a Committee Member or the General Secretary to be contacted providing details of the release for announcement to competitors.

6.2.3 Conveyers & Liberator. The appointed Liberator has responsibility for performing the release of pigeons, at the liberation site, in such a manner as to avoid potential for injury to the pigeons on release. The authority to release pigeons, in all races, rests with the above-mentioned group. The Liberator shall contact a pre-arranged and nominated Delegate of the Management Committee or the General Secretary, at least one hour prior to the release, to report on route conditions, discuss local conditions and receive approval to liberate. Having liberated, the Liberator will again contact the nominated delegate to provide details of the liberation for announcement to competitors

6.3 Race Delays and Holdovers.

6.3.1 Where the liberation is delayed because of adverse weather conditions, such delay will remain in force until the Hold –over time is declared. When the hold-over time is declared the pigeons will be held for a planned release the next day.

6.3.2 Second Day. The person responsible may decide, either individually or in consultation with the Management Committee or the General Secretary, to:

- a) Release the pigeons at a pre-determined time or in the case of adverse Weather conditions still prevailing, hold the Birds at the original Release Site until holdover-time is again reached.

When the holdover-time is declared with no release possible, the following will apply.

1. The Person Responsible in Consultation with the Management Committee or the General Secretary shall decide to Hold the Birds at the Original Release Site for a planned Release on the Third Day or declare the Race cancelled and the Pigeons returned and released at a suitable location near Adelaide.

6.3.3 Third Day.

- a) Hold the birds at the original site until it becomes evident the Race must be declared cancelled and the Pigeons returned and released at a suitable location near Adelaide.

6.4 Rain or Fog or Heat.

6.4.1 Rain and Fog at release sites are known to interfere with the pigeons' ability to orientate. Pigeons therefore are not to be released away from the home loft³, for racing into rain or fog.

6.4.2 Heat. Where temperature conditions are expected to be approaching 32^o Celsius, either *en route* or at the release location, extreme caution must be exercised. The Association must have in place a communication system for alerting members should a race cancellation occur, due to any of these weather extremes.

6.5 Release Time.

The release of pigeons for racing are governed by conditions at the release site and the time of the year. During the months of June to August pigeons are to be released as follows:

- Under clear sky conditions – release a minimum of 15 minutes After gazetted sunrise for the area.
- Under over-cast sky conditions – release a minimum of 30 minutes after gazetted sunrise for the area.

During the months of September and October pigeons are to be released as follows:

- Under clear sky conditions – release at the discretion of the person(s) responsible for releasing the birds.
- Under over-cast sky conditions – release a minimum of 30 minutes after gazetted sunrise for the area.

7. **PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUGS: DRUG FREE RACING.**

It is SAHPA Inc. policy that pigeon racing remains free of any administered performance enhancing drugs and this has particular reference to the use of any of the anabolic steroids and corticosteroids or any other banned substance declared by the SAHPA Inc. Any competitor found to have entered a pigeon administered with any performance enhancing drugs will be held responsible and be dealt with by the SAHPA Inc. Any pigeons found sick or dead within the panniers at liberation can, at the discretion of the Management Committee, be sent for analysis. Where any inappropriate performance enhancing substance is detected, the owner(s) will be held responsible and the matter dealt with by the SAHPA Inc.

³ Colloquial term. The name "Loft" (GB) is widely used in pigeon racing to describe or indicate the pigeon cage, house or coop (USA) and has its origin as the traditional hay loft used for keeping pigeons, or in many European areas in the attic of the house.

- 7.1.1 Any Member found guilty of administering performance enhancing drugs to their birds or being and accomplice to administering performance enhancing drugs to Racing Pigeons for the purpose of gaining an advantage over his/her/ their competitors will be disqualified from competing in all races that are conducted under the auspices of the S.A.H.P.A. Inc. for a period of time determined by the Constitution, Rules and/or By-laws of the S.A.H.P.A. Inc. – Refer TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP Rule (9) – Performance Enhancing Drugs.

THE PIGEON “LOFT”

8.1 Dimensions.

The SAHPA Inc. recognises pigeon lofts are constructed in many sizes to suit or fit individual circumstances, such as available space within a conventional residential block, and it is not intended to interfere with this freedom. Instead, the SAHPA Inc. encourages members and affiliates to be aware the sport of pigeon racing as a member of the Association is a privilege. However the owner of a pigeon must ensure the following minimum standards are met:

8.2 Living Quarters – Racing Loft

- 8.2.1 The minimum space available to each bird is recommended to be **0.092 m³** or **450 mm x 450 mm x 450 mm**. (the approximate size of an auction pen).

An example of maximum permissible pigeons and minimum box perches per occupied space in the Living Quarters is described as follows:

Loft dimension 1800mm (Width) x 2100mm (Length) x 1800mm(height) = 6.804m³ divided by 0.092m³ = maximum 74 pigeons and minimum 81 box perches.

8.3 The Stock Bird Loft.

The stock bird loft is used for housing the breeding pigeons of the loft and because of their value and likely background of racing from some other inter or intra state loft, are not able to be freed for exercise. These pigeons require extended space for their good health and well being.

- 8.3.1 Living Quarters. The stock loft shall generally be of similar configuration as the racing loft, except, in the place of box perches, breeding compartments are provided. Required minimum dimensions for breeding compartments are 550 mm wide x 450 mm

high x 500 mm deep. Adequate space to maintain health and well being of pigeons, within the breeding loft, is calculated as two and one half (2.5) times the provision, as minimum space, per pigeon in living quarters.

The **Maximum allowable number** is calculated from the above example as follows:

Loft dimensions 1800 mm wide x 2100 mm long x 1800 mm high = 6.804 m³ (6804000 cm³) divided by (0.092m³ x 2.5) space allocated for racing birds = 30 pigeons, (or 15 mated pairs) for the space provided.

8.4 The Ideal Loft.

The following is provided only as a guide but reasonably reflects the hallmarks of a well-organised and well-constructed pigeon racing loft.

There are a number of essential elements, which make up the building of a loft. It needs to be dry and warm over the winter months and therefore needs to be built for that period of year in mind. For the summer heat it also needs to have ventilation modifications, such as flaps and ventilators that can be adjusted and closed off as the winter approaches. It needs to be configured for ease of cleaning and for the comfort of the pigeons and box type perches are most suitable for both. Where practical, it needs to be sited on the lot so the front of the loft faces away from prevailing winter winds and rain, whilst making full advantage of the morning winter sun.

8.5 Ventilation. There needs to be adequate air exchange within a pigeon-racing loft without causing drafts. Under and over floor ventilation promotes essential dryness required for a healthy loft.

Gabled type roofs are encouraged to cater for adequate air displacement. Where a gabled roof is not provided, an opening at ceiling height at the rear to the outside, of no less than 100 mm along the full length of the loft, is to be provided. Alternatively, a 'witches hat' type chimney or similar ventilator should be placed centrally within the roof to affect the required air exchange and to promote good health and comfort for the pigeons.

8.6 Preferred Construction. (Recommended)

8.6.1 Lofts have been constructed to a number of standards and designs and it is not intended for these lofts to conform to the Code of Practice, whilst they continue to be utilised in their present configuration. New or upgraded lofts must be constructed in accordance with the following minimum standards and in accordance with Council requirements.

- 8.6.2 Off - Ground. All new lofts constructed off-ground shall have a minimum clearance height from ground to floor level of 200mm, allowing for free flow of air under floor.

Floor areas may be either of two configurations:

- a) Trafficable mesh grating floor, allowing droppings to pass through for collection below floor level.
- b) Trafficable timber floor with moisture absorptive qualities and for regular ease of scrape cleaning. E.g. Chip board, or Plywood.

- 8.6.3 On – Ground

Where possible all new lofts constructed on-ground must be of concrete slab floor construction and shall have a heavy duty plastic moisture barrier laid underneath at pouring. An adequate floor level ventilation facility must be provided.

- 8.6.4 Aviaries

For the health of the pigeons, external open aviaries and or sun yards which are exposed to the elements should ideally be constructed off ground, typically by using trafficable mesh floor for under floor cleaning, or other suitable floor materials.

- 8.6.5 Insulation.

For the welfare and comfort of pigeons, where external cladding of a loft consists of brick or metal such lofts shall be internally lined with plywood, or chipboard, or other heat retaining materials. For prevention of condensation dampness, all metal roofs must be insulated.

9. LOFT CLEANING.

Loft floors are to be cleaned on a regular basis – where possible protective equipment should be utilized.

10. FEED AND WATER.

The owner of a pigeon must ensure the following standards are met:

10.1 Feed.

There are many successful methods for feeding of racing pigeons and it is not intended to regulate this activity other than to document normal feeds and feed practice.

Essentially, racing pigeons thrive quite effectively on most grains and legumes, with wheat being the base staple. It is usual to supplement a wheat

based diet to varying percentages with field peas, maize, sorghum, oats, rice, barley, certain pellet preparations and other small grains. The normal feed regime, for racing pigeons, is to feed twice daily, and to be given after exercise. As a regulatory minimum, pigeons must be fed at least once daily.

- 10.2 Water. Clean water in the home loft, available at all times. It is recommended that Water should be changed twice daily and more frequently in summer months especially in the stock loft. As a minimum standard, fresh water must be provided daily.

11. **STRAY BIRD MANAGEMENT.**

The SAHPA Inc. and affiliates recognise appropriate management of lost, or injured, pigeons belonging to members is a critical part of our Charter. Fostering the welfare of our pigeons is a prime interest of our sport of racing them. Accordingly, non-adherence to our strict policies relating to lost bird acknowledgment and collection will be viewed very seriously and may result in suspension or cancellation of membership.

12. **ACKNOWLEDGMENT.**

The South Australian Homing Pigeon Association Inc., greatly appreciate and express our gratitude to the Racing Pigeon Federations of Western Australia and the Central Cumberland Racing Pigeon Federation for allowing the SAHPA Inc., to use the main contents and/or concepts of their Codes of Practice.

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