

KEEP LOFTS AND FLIGHTS SCRUPULOUSLY CLEAN

Now that breeding is well and truly over and you have your team to fly this season selected, it is up to you to do the utmost with what you have available. All lofts and flights should be kept scrupulously clean, as should the water and food. No bird can thrive in filthy conditions.

Plenty of fresh air, is also essential. Make sure that the bottom eight or nine inches around the bottom of your loft is all wire, not enclosed, so that there will always be a free circulation of air.

Keep the front of the loft as open as possible, but free from piercing wind. Your birds to do well must be clean inside and out, and living in fresh wholesome surroundings. The days of dark corners in lofts and overcrowded perches are gone.

Few if any fliers believe in a loft crammed with birds, many of which find it necessary to be cooped up in a dark corner to avoid being pecked by stronger companions. Make sure that there is more than one perch for each bird. If you don't arrange it that way then each time you go

to the loft start looking for a cull.

You'll find one and you'll keep finding one until you have the accommodation necessary to keep birds correctly. That is, if you are sincere in wanting to find proper perch room.

When culling make sure that the bird being culled is below standard when considered from its age view point. Don't just leave all the big birds on the perches and remove those that are smaller. Size combined with type and balance is what is wanted, not just big seagull types. Most of these are useless actually, but are traps for young players. Those big wing butts and that eagle type head gives a novice the impression that they are in the Boeing Jet class.

FOR THE BEGINNER

(By GRADUATE)

This isn't true, as in many cases they are just big, overfed and oversized loafers.

If in doubt regarding the ones to keep and the ones to cull check with some other fancier regarding his ideas. Feel his birds that he prizes so highly and go home and double check on yours.

Colour is of no consequence. I know a flier who has done well over the years but who wouldn't have a red in his box. The reason for this was that he, at one time had a considerable number of these coloured birds and although they looked extremely well and won a lot in the show pens they never measured up on the line, yet I won most of my big races with reds, which he admired and respected. However you could not talk him into again flying reds. This is an unreasonable attitude and one that cannot be supported. They fly well in all colours and they fly well in all sizes. What matters is the strain, the type, balance and heart. You can judge all of these except the last, with the bird in the hand once you get to know your birds. The extent of heart or courage possessed by a bird just like its trapping ability is only something which can be discovered by testing. The races will sort this out for you and you won't need to have any explanation other than straight out wins or losses.

You should by now be giving your team short tosses and familiarising them with the surrounding area for 25 miles in all directions. It is no use saying "Oh we are flying the North" so you don't need to toss in a westerly or southerly direction.

Birds get carried off course by being caught up in a big mob and before they know where they are they are south or west of where they should be to drop into home. So why wouldn't you toss from all directions?

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Short and often is the drill. You can give a couple of short tosses weekly and it will pay off. Regarding the birds going through the moult I wouldn't worry unduly about tossing them for short hops, because unless the blood quill is showing its early growth they won't get wing sore or over strained.

A little linseed in their diet will help the moult along and give them a quick drop of feathers and a sheen on the new ones. I wouldn't overdo forcing the moult as it is a natural thing which only requires the birds to be kept under healthy conditions inside and out for it to be effected properly.

Birds which are poorly fed or which are kept in squalid conditions end up passing through a moult as sick and sorry specimens which are deficient in wide and strength of feather and lacking in substance. This time, like the first six weeks of a squeakers' life, is the period when they need good wholesome food in the way of maple peas, corn, and red wheat. If they are being fed bread or simply fowl wheat during this time

they don't ever have the feather or the healthy look of birds fed correctly.

Make sure that there is plenty of fresh clean water, good grit available and greens once or twice a week. Make sure that the birds are free from lice etc., and that the perches are clean and disinfected regularly.

At this stage it is perhaps just as well to keep all the young stock in together in the loft without segregation of the sexes, but if you have any ideas that it may upset them later if separated during the season and you don't want to interfere with their routine then you may put all the cocks in one side of the loft and the hens in the other.

Fly hens in the morning for training and cocks at night. They will then get accustomed to working with their own sex and returning without confusion to their regular perches. Later when they are through the moult completely and you are working both sexes morning and night, for about an hour, they will automatically return to their own side of the loft when feeding and perching, and

you will have little trouble in keeping the birds in their correct side of the loft.

It is much of a personal question whether you want your birds separated according to sex or whether you leave them all in together. There are arguments for and against both ideas, and possibly it is an idea to try out each method, one one season and the other the next and see just how each suits your programme.

Training birds is something that varies with individual owners and individual strains and is not something that can be laid down hard and fast as "you must do this or you must do that." There are however, certain fundamentals that should be observed at all times with all strains, and these are largely a matter of straight out commonsense.

Perhaps the most important factor to be considered is that birds are creatures of habit, and therefore everything that is done, if it is done to train the birds into particular habits, should be done regularly, at the same time, and in the same time, and in the same manner. Any varia
(Continued page 16)

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KEEP LOFT CLEAN
(Continued from page 15)

tions of approach only tend to confuse the birds, and so we must always get up by the clock, let the birds into the air for their training flight at the same time, and feed them back in at the same time, or if the flying time is being extended then it should be done gradually, just as should any change in diet be made by slight daily increases or decreases rather than an overnight noticeable change.

Trapping is also something that should be done methodically and with some thought or planning. Winning or losing a race depends in many cases on the trapping time. Be lackadaisical in your trapping each morning and night and you'll find that on race day the bird that may have homed in the fastest time, wastes precious minutes sitting on the roof of the loft or going for short excursions around the box or hopping from the loft roof to the ground and back up again. Remember that a bird that has been released some hundreds

of miles away from home in a strange place from a strange basket mixed with hundreds of strange birds is going to be very highly excited when it does arrive home, and trapping it into its cage can be a vastly harder proposition than trapping it in each morning or night after its training exercise. So if you have had troubles normally, how much more so are they going to be hard to get into the cage when in an agitated and exhausted state?

This is a point that should be kept in mind each day when the birds are returning from their exercise flight, and so no time should be wasted in getting them to trap in smartly. Keep them a trifle hungry and the sight of the food in the cage with the first ones in eating it briskly will be an incentive to most to get in rapidly before the food has gone. Any bad trappers should be made miss a meal or two. This will greatly assist to get them with the leaders to the feed.

It is because they know these sort of important little things and apply

them that make the old hands the masters of the sport. Be observant, and think all the time about teaching the birds good habits. Keep a daily log book and record even the smallest details such as how much was fed, how long you flew them for, what time they went out and came back, how the sky was, whether they worked well or poorly and how certain birds trapped. You'll find if you are a person that analyses things, that later on when you look back over these details and sum them up with your wins or losses, you'll see just why you succeeded or failed. Good luck and keep looking at the birds and thinking.

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