

## ***Give Thought To Training Of Your Bird***

Now that the flying season is well under way novices and even old hands give considerable thought to which is the best way to train their birds, and just how much exercise should be given daily. Naturally everyone wants to do the best for their birds and themselves and no matter what system you use you will probably always be trying to improve upon it so that your birds reach the ultimate peak of perfection in condition and performance.

No one could ever tell you exactly what to do with your team as various strains or even families of birds react differently to systems or patterns of training for conditioning. Some strains require

considerable work while others require only an average amount. Only the birds could tell you what is the answer to this poser, and it is the birds that will tell if you are an observant person. If you are not then you won't make much of a pigeon flyer anyway. What is suggested is that at this time of the year that the birds be flown for half an hour each end of the day except on the day or days when tosses are given.

Some may feel that is insufficient and others may contend it is too much. If you watch your birds and find that they are enjoying their half hour freedom in the morning and afternoon and are still very perky then you aren't far off what is needed. If you have trouble trapping in

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Due to my moving house I am forced to sell my entire 1991 Race Team of untrained Birds. As well as approximately 10 pair of Proven Stock Birds and my 19' X 6' Race Loft.

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and they are running far from the loft and not returning for three quarters of an hour then there is no need for concern that they are overexercising. The birds will know whether they are getting overtired and overtaxed or not. If on the other hand you find difficulty in getting them to stay aloft for the stated period and that they are dropping in or endeavouring to after about 15 minutes then you need to do a bit of thinking about the matter. If your birds are not exercising around the loft but are flying for only a matter of minutes and then they are tending to pitch in or sit on the loft roof and if chased they simply drop on to a nearby roof top and remain there until you permit them to return to the loft then you have to do something definite and do it quickly before you develop bad trappers. The famous Belgian flyer Gurnay who developed the widowhood system of racing birds to win used to have masts attached to his loft with a flag running up and down on them to keep his birds air borne. So don't feel too badly about your birds not being prone to get up and go for half to three quarters of an hour every morning and night. Just remember that Gurnay among others had this same problem. My approach to the situation is to make sure first of all that your birds are fit and well. If this is so then you won't have much trouble with them. If not then get to it and clean them out and the loft out to make sure that their surroundings are clean and healthy. Make sure that their diet is a nourishing and wholesome one and that they are not being overfed or underfed. Make sure that they have access to pure cool water at all times and that it can't get soiled inadvertently. Make sure the loft is not overcrowded. There should be a perch for every bird and some perches to spare. They should have clean grit and access to salt, and greens such as spinach should be accessible on Sundays as well as a bath on that day. There should be no lice on them or in the loft. The perches should be spotless and there should be a permanent excellent supply of fresh air without draughts. Birds can put up with cold but not stuffy overheated conditions. Nothing sends them

off condition more than overcrowding and overheating or overfeeding.

If you have complied with all these things then you will find that your birds have a sparkle and a zest for life and flying. If you have done what is suggested and they have this air of well being but are loathe to fly the time you think they should when exercising them lock them down for a day or two and then let them out at very early morning only for a few more days and then stop this practice and try them only at late afternoons. You may find them performing just as well in races as with the other system. In fact you may find them improved. If birds have a very humdrum existence they are apt to be bored just like you and I, so by varying their exercise it could be the very boost needed to break this roof sitting habit. If you then find that they still don't work as you would like then lock them down completely and simply exercise them from tosses. Now this means more work for you but could pay dividends as the tosses would naturally be given on the line of flight and twice or even three times a week. This in itself at this time of the year would be sufficient exercise for birds that don't work well around lofts for they could be the type that don't need lots of training for top performances. This has been seen with boxers, runners, footballers etc. and it is common knowledge that what system of training suits one person doesn't necessarily suit another any more than medical treatments even can be taken as acceptable by all.

Unfortunately birds are individuals yet we must of necessity train them as a mob, which in itself must react against the majority. Fortunately most racing teams are fairly closely interbred and so the racing team is fairly well balanced as far as size, type and character are concerned.

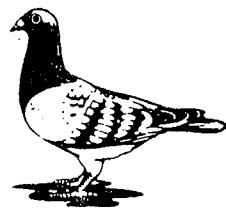
But even although they may be nest-mates there can be differences in all these respects. We have all known of greyhounds, race horses and pigeons to say nothing of humans where full brother

or sister are completely the opposite yet are reared under the same conditions and fed the same food. It is this fact that makes reproducing identical types so difficult and it is also this factor that tends towards preventing mob training as being the best. From this standpoint it is possible that tosses and especially single or double tosses are the best approach to such problems. Mob liberations of your birds on tosses proves little except that some birds dragged along by their fellows. You could say "Well what about in races with mass liberations, and isn't this the same thing?" To this I'd reply "Yes, it is but racing and training are two different things and you can't expect birds to race and show out daily." The tendency in flying with a mob is to go with them and it isn't the winner that does this but the winner is the bird that uses the mob to pace it and then breaks from the mob and flies its own course home. I remember winning a Gympie to Sydney race by three quarter of an hour with a bird, so for sure it couldn't have been with them for some long time at the closing stages of the event.

For birds to fly they must be in perfect health and this is the point that is often overlooked. The tendency is to feel that the birds are given regular exercise and fed and watered and so they should all repond equally well. This is not so and never has been and never will be. If this were so then all the birds in a race from the loft would home simultaneously and this doesn't happen even from short races of about 50 or 60 miles. This in itself should prove that birds are individuals and must be treated as such, if real success is to be enjoyed. It is this fact that causes so much controversy among flyers as to what is the right time for exercising morning and night or morning or night. Various strains require certain exercise and birds within the strain require variations to this in actual fact but because of neccessity don't get it. Actually although a mob may fly well for half or three quarters of an hour or even an hour when released from a loft this does not mean that this is the time they

all needed. It would be true to say it suited the majority of them and this is why they stayed aloft. Some may have liked to have dropped sooner but were kept aloft and away from home by the ones that enjoyed more flying. In addition there would be birds that would have done more work if alone or if accompanied by similar birds but were dragged back by the majority that felt they had done enough. This in itself produces the thought that the tendency is once again towards the average rather than the outstanding as the average would be the majority. Thus it is that tosses really solve this problem as although the distance covered from a toss would not vary for any of the tossed birds but the flying time would vary considerably and it is from such results that you can tell which bird is made of and just what its actual condition at the time. From these observations you may select the birds to send to races and the ones to pool.

Think about it and see what you can do to improve your birds' performances this season. It isn't too late as the main part of the season is to come and it isn't a case of hunting birds aloft from around your loft for the regular times to win races. Sometimes a short let up seves an even better purpose.



#### ***Plan for when on holidays***

When holidays come around pigeon-eers will, like others, want to take a holiday. Many will think that this is not possible and put the thought from their mind "on account of the pigeons". This is far from the truth. If you want to take advantage of your vacation from work, which occurs for most people at Christmas time, there is no real reason why you

can't. Of course it will require a little planning and preparation on your part but won't it be worth it?

Birds really only required food, water and grit and a good padlock to stop your "friends" from "culling" your loft for you during your temporary absence. The padlock of the affair doesn't need any advice from me as this would be obvious. What needs looking into is a safe system whereby your birds will definitely have a good supply of clean wholesome food and water for a week or so. Grit boxes may be made of sufficient dimensions to take sufficient grit, charcoal, sand and salt as in most lofts grit boxes are only replenished every week or so anyway, so here again is no problem.

Feeding will not matter if they are overfed or hopper fed at this time of the year as the birds aren't in work nor are they nesting and locked down into a myriad of nesting boxes. But this time of the year the birds are in the loft which is usually sub-divided into two sections, one for cocks and one for hens so the extent of food and water required is likewise sub-divided or halved so this again assists in the problem being solved.

There are several good automatic type waterers on the market which mainly consist of a central container (usually circular) which is covered by a fairly closely fitting cover which locks by rotating it and engaging slots on to extended pegs or rivets from the water container. A hole near the bottom feeds into the surrounding tray from which the birds drink, the cover and hole being actually water sealed by the type of construction or design. As the birds drink from the tray the water level drops inside and compensates for the removal of water from the tray. Although I am not an advocate for these in flying lofts they do serve a good purpose in cases such as extended periods when the birds are not attended to daily. This type of waterer or drinker can be left on in each side of the loft and so the water problem is virtually solved. Some with more plumbing knowledge

and ingenuity may devise a cistern type of drinker part of which extends into the loft and the other extends outside. The outside part contains the ball float and supply pipe of water is attached to this so that at all times there is a direct supply of water from the town supply. With such a system no one need ever worry about water problems, because they become non-existent. The only thing that ever needs attention is that the inside needs a weekly scrub for removal of any fouling that may occur from algae (green water weed).

Hoppers may be made for the storing of any quantity you like of peas, wheat, small corn or pigeon pellet. It depends on how many birds you have and how long you will be away as to what the dimensions of the hopper will be. All it needs is a body of sheet metal to take the grain, a slide placed inside at a fairly steep angle to direct the feed into the tray or trough along the front of the side which does not extend right to the bottom of the hte body structure and through which slot the grain will emerge. As a lengthy narrow body structure takes up less room in the loft and gives a greater feeding length it permits not only the maximum number of birds to feed simultaneously but is less bulky.

The lid through which the grain is placed into the hopper is simply of the flat type so it really isn't hard to fit or make. If you like the whole thing can be of wooden structure, but I prefer galvanised iron as it is lighter and you haven't the thickness of the wood to contend with as far as space and capacity of the hopper is concerned.

What is advisable is to have a friend or neighbour look in on the loft every third or fourth day to just see that there is water and feed. They need not enter the loft but simply give it the "once-over". Leave the key to the loft with them just in case the front of the hopper needs a bump to let jammed grain or pellets drop down or to check that the water drinker is still working as it is supposed to be.

Clean the loft thoroughly the day before you leave so that the loft will not be too dirty when you return, as this could have a bad effect on penned young stock which you intend to fly the coming season. Young birds should never have any setbacks if you are to do well with them, but don't become a crank about them and forgo your holidays for them as it isn't necessary. Cleanliness is essential at all times and therefore the "last minute" clean up before departure is something which should not be overlooked. Also if you like you could place some greens in the loft the morning of departure so they won't be deficient in the diet in any way.

The day before you leave for the vacation I suggest that the birds, if loft trained have a complete day with an open loft. They will get all the exercise they need for a few days anyway, and so will not be over excited about being locked down for the week or so that you may be absent. Don't however, get up early the day you are leaving and let them out as you may be delayed in your departure by some bird that won't trap as required. If this should happen maybe the wife would get ideas about not having pigeons or if you are single, Mum or Dad may get the same thoughts.

It may appear when the whole thing is viewed that it seems it would be simpler not to bother about going away at all, be actually as far as cleaning the loft having a padlock on it, the greens, the grit, the water and the feed it isn't much different to normal routine, other than the feed hopper and waterer. Like all parts of pigeon management, be organised and you won't have any regrets; nor will you find owning pigeons something which interferes with your life but rather something that adds to it.



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## Robert Scealy of Tamworth N.S.W.

Robert Scealy's involvement with racing pigeons has taken on a whole new meaning since winning the prestigious Dorothea McKellar National Poetry Award.

Robert, 10 years old, from Tamworth, won the major open primary award in a competition that attracted more than 3,000 entries Australia-wide from 800 schools.

The title of this year's theme was "Coming Home"

"At first I didn't really know what to write about," Robert said.

"Everyone else was writing about things like coming home from the war but eventually I wrote a poem about a homing pigeon escaping home after a hawk attacked it.

"I got the inspiration for that from owning pigeons as it has happened to some of our birds.

"I didn't think I would win because I've never really been interested in poetry."

For his efforts, Robert has won a replica of the Dorothea McKellar statue and \$250 cash.

Robert's teacher, Mrs Clifton, from Tamworth Public School, said "I think Robert's entry was chasen above the rest becasue it was original, and he kept away from the conventional topics."

The judges considered Robert's poem to be of international standard.

The presentation was at the Gala Australia Day Awards at Gunnedah Town Hall on 26th January, where Mr Frank

**"REMINDER" — SUNDAY 2ND JUNE, 1991.**  
 IN EVENT OF HOLD-OVER — 9TH JUNE, 1991.

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