

TRAINING STARTS SOON

With the first race from Carrington set for May 22 it won't be long before the initial training flights begin and no time can be lost before exercise around the loft begins in earnest.

Old hands realise the importance of home area education prior to tossing young birds along the road and make certain their pigeons are ready for the task before giving them the first training toss.

They know from experience that heavy losses can result from the shortest distances if youngsters are still "green" and not properly conversant with the home area.

The beginner is advised to be patient and curb his enthusiasm to get started until he is sure his team is ready.

Too many good youngsters are thrown away each year because of the impatience of the novice, and if the losses are heavy early, the whole season can be ruined to such extent that he will find he has wasted a full year.

Young birds must first learn to fly together in one batch, if they are tossed while they

fly all over the sky in ones and twos they will be lucky to make home from a distance of five miles.

It will be noticed that shortly after they are used to batch flying they will "run" from the home area and so join with other batches at exercise.

A few weeks of this education is usually all that is needed to prepare them for the road.

Mixing with other batches serves a dual purpose: it teaches them to fly in mob company and to think for themselves when breaking away in search of home—both vital factors in their preliminary education.

While they are gaining this mental confidence they are also building the physical condition needed to keep them in flight over long periods.

After four or five weeks of this kind of exercise it will be noticed that they will show no sign of physical stress on their return to the loft. Birds which return early and land, which to stand with mouth agape and wings down are still out of condition.

If the young fancier is observing he will notice that the birds themselves by their behaviour around the loft, will let him know whether they are ready or not.

Pigeons which exercise for periods of up to one hour, which return home full of enthusiasm for their feed, are ready for the road whereas they are shortfighted or not so enthusiastic and which refuse to remain in the air for long should be left at home.

Now the thousand beam shows since notice was given in these notes that the SAHP Association may include a race of 1,000 miles in its programme, and which it has now done, many queries have been received asking whether a 1,000-mile race has ever been flown into SA.

It is certain that the Association has never flown a race of 1,000 miles—its longest race ever was held from Zanithus, 950 miles, about forty years ago.

It is almost as certain that if such a distance has been accomplished in the past, the route over which it was held was the WA line.

It is possible that one or more of our northern country clubs, such as Kadina, Moonta, Port Pirie, Port Augusta, Whyalla and Jamestown may have tried it in years gone by, and that some ambitious owner tried it privately, rumors have it so, but nothing definite has so far been received.

Pigeon Notes By Vin Blanden

Races have been flown into these country towns from points as far west as Rawlinna and Loongana in recent years, but if one of 1,000 miles was ever held it must have been from a point further west than Zanithus.

Perhaps there are records of such a race or maybe some of the old hands in the country can still remember details.

If so we would be pleased to hear about it.

How long does it take?
Young intending fanciers often ask the question: "How long does it take to breed four or six youngsters from a breeding pair?"

Assuming that the parent birds are an average pair the first pair of youngsters should hatch four weeks after the date of mating.

The average hen lays her first egg on the ninth or tenth day and her second egg two days later and the incubation period of 18 or 19 days sets the hatching date at 27 to 29 days after the breeding pair have been put together.

When the youngsters are 12 to 14 days old, the hen will lay the first egg of the second nest and in turn will lay the first egg of the third nest when the second pair of squabblers are about two weeks of age.

The first pair will be ready to leave the nest a few days before the second nest eggs are due to hatch—about eight weeks after the hatching date—and likewise the second pair of youngsters will be ready to leave the third nest about the same time following the hatching date of the first birds.

On an average the young fancier will find that four months have passed when his third pair of squabblers leave the nest—birds.

Providing the breeders are mated at the right time and are given every proper attention throughout, there is no reason why four healthy pairs cannot be reared without physical detriment to the parents.

The cost of feeding his birds is also a constant query and of some importance to the young beginner.

Providing he purchases his grain by the bushel or the bag (not by the one or two pound weights etc.) the young fancier will find he can maintain a flock of 30 racing pigeons for less than five shillings a week.

Pigeons can be raced and trained on one ounce of grain per day, and at today's prices a mixture of equal parts of wheat and field peas together with a supply of shell grit, sufficient for the purpose, can be obtained for less than five shillings weekly—not a high price to pay for such an enjoyable and rewarding hobby.