

Only The Weak Should Die

The novice should only cull young birds if he is overstocked, and if culling is necessary, he will be wise if it is only the weak ones which are eliminated.

The only way to determine the quality of the unraced youngster is to race it; physical appearance, or beauty means little, for the desirable traits are hidden.

Good consistent racers come in all colors, shapes and sizes, which are usually family characteristics, and are of little value as a measuring stick for assessing the flock as a whole.

The old hand with his own family or strain is better equipped to cull because past records of the youngsters bred from various pairs in his breeding loft supply most of the clues necessary for him to sort the good from the bad.

In many cases, the good ones bred from a pair possess discernable traits that are lacking in the poor ones, and in this instance the experienced fancier can cull with the maximum of safety.

While the old hand can cut down the numbers with a minimum of risk in his own loft, he is not qualified to cull others bred in another loft and which are not of his strain.

The only way he can assist the novice in this respect is to point out the weak ones.

Therefore, the young fancier is advised to allow his strong youngsters to prove their value by way of performance in the races.

Small Value

It is a fact that in the best of lofts, at least 60 p.c. of those raced prove of small value as a racer, and so fail to measure up to expectations, even though the owner knows his pigeons well.

The point is that despite the knowledge gained by experience

over the years, the successful owner is still not good enough, or stupid enough, to attempt to eliminate this 60 p.c. early in the season so that money can be saved.

This should provide the newcomer with some idea of the enormity of his disadvantage if he tries to cull his pigeons because some of them don't appeal to him.

The best way to assess the value of his judgment is to make a note of his selections before the season begins and lock the note away until the programme is completed.

If he recovers from the shock, he will stand a good chance of becoming successful in later years.

There is positively no sure way to assess the worth of the unraced youngster.

If the novice is equipped with the various books which divulge the "secrets" of selection, he is advised to put them on the shelf marked "Fables and Fallacies" and set about the task of learning how to condition his pigeons for the job.

He will find that the best eyes to have are his own, if he uses them properly.

Inside Loft

The best policy to use them is inside his loft where every hour spent is worth a dozen wasted elsewhere.

Too many young fanciers spend too much time in and around other lofts and not enough in their own.

It is important that they be taught the basic principles of proper care and management and the best teacher is the successful "old hand."

There are few experienced owners who are not willing to set the newcomer on the right track by means of sound advice and often by way of providing sound stock, but as soon as the novice has gained these essentials he should be content.

He will progress further and faster if he stays in his own backyard and spends his spare time with his own pigeons.

There will be occasions when further advice is required.

When these eventuate, he should put the question to the successful "old hand," who, in most cases will be able to provide the correct reply.

It is useless seeking the answers from others no better qualified than himself.

The novice must realize that there are many methods of training and racing which are of equal value, and he will be on the right track if he selects one and sticks to it. Chopping and messing about with several will keep him at the rear end of the field.

He will find that the best of systems will provide the good, bad and average sea-

sons, when success or failure rests mainly on the number of good ones he breeds from year to year.

As one can spend a lifetime in the sport without really mastering any one system, even the "old hand" is at a loss to find the reason for a bad year.

However, when the next programme is flown, he still retains his old methods, and it is amazing how often a good season follows a bad one.

One of the hardest things to determine is to know when a pigeon has had enough to eat. Even the "old hand" cannot pass this advice on to the novice, because something inexplicable tells him when to stop feeding.

There is no doubt that more pigeons are overfed than underfed and the newcomer will only gain the happy medium by his own personal observations made in his own loft.

The best he can be told is that overfed birds will fly to their perches and stay there, and underfed ones will flutter wildly to the loft front every time he passes nearby.

Those which have received the correct amount are active in the loft throughout most of the day, without sign of lassiness of the overfed, or the frantic energy of the underfed.

Once the novice can obtain the desired balance of the two, and learns how much to feed each bird to maintain it, he will find he is well on the way to the front.

It is not a simple matter of feeding the same amount per bird every day of the week, because the factors of temperature, time spent at exercise and the easiness or difficulty of Saturday's race must all be considered if the correct ration is to be provided.

"Secrets"

However, these are the "secrets" he must find for himself as time goes on. The most important thing early in his career is that he doesn't cull the strong youngster because he doesn't like the look of it.

He is advised to let them prove themselves on the road, and at the end of the season he will find that most of the despised ones are still on the perch and most of the favorites are absent.

Readers will be sorry to learn that former fancier Doug Perkins is in hospital at Port Pirie with a heart condition.

Mr. Perkins is well-known for his performance of winning two Melbourne to Port Pirie races with the same hen.

Latest reports say that Mr. Perkins is making good progress.

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