

SAHPA INC

CODE OF PRACTICE

Amended 7th August 2025

SAHPA RULE No 4 - CODE OF PRACTICE

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1 Preface

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

1.2 This Code provides the minimum acceptable standards for:

- Housing and environmental factors affecting health,
- Racing and training practices - especially as they affect the chances of an individual pigeon safely returning to its loft.
- Transport of pigeons to races and training flights.
- Protocols and procedures to enhance the ability of a pigeon to return safely to its loft.

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

2 Basic Information – Pigeon Racing

- Race pigeons must be exercised daily (either loft flying or race (toss) training), sufficient to ensure its fitness for racing - at least 30 minutes duration per day for loft flying.
- Race pigeons returning from racing, training or loft flight exercise should be trapped into the loft.
- Toss training (birds taken between 50kms and 200kms for race training purposes) is necessary for race fitness.
- Stock birds – those used for breeding – in which case suitable sized cages must be provided which may include ‘enclosed’ flyouts.
- Loft flying must be conducted under the direct supervision of the owner.
- Other than for planned free flight all race pigeons must be confined within their home loft. Persistent fielding and/or roof sitting is prohibited.
- Race pigeons must be housed within a loft designed to provide adequate and appropriate shelter and accommodation for the birds, 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.
- It is recognised that pigeon racing involves races and training exercises (toss training) where some birds do not return to their home loft. Many of these lost birds die through predation. The causes of the losses are generally poorly understood except in relation to predation from falcons and hawks. The fact that birds released on a race or training exercise do not return to the home loft is not evidence of neglect or mistreatment of the pigeons involved.

3 DUTY OF CARE TO PIGEONS

Any 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) primarily responsible for the day-to-day management of that bird.

3.1 Vaccinations for Pigeon Virus.

Pigeons need to be protected against outbreaks of identified pigeon virus. The SAHPA mandates compulsory vaccinations for Rotavirus, Pigeon paramyxovirus (PPMV1) and Pigeon Pox. Pigeons should be vaccinated with the appropriate

recognised vaccine (where available) for the identified virus, at the dosage recommended by the manufacturer.

3.2 Health & Wellbeing.

The health of the pigeon needs to be monitored on a regular basis and if necessary veterinary advice and help sought in the treatment and prevention of disease and elimination of internal and external parasites & pests.

4 ILL TREATMENT OF PIGEONS

This document notes that ill treatment includes wounding, mutilating, abusing, tormenting, torturing, wanton, or malicious beating and causing unnecessary pain, neglect and/or suffering. Ill treatment is defined by the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1985, as any action or inaction which results in unnecessary or unreasonable pain, suffering or distress. The owner of a pigeon has a responsibility to provide it with adequate and appropriate food, water, shelter, and exercise.

5 ACCEPTANCE AND INSPECTION OF PIGEONS FOR COMPETITION

- 5.1 The SAHPA acknowledges the depth of expertise for pigeon care available within each member club and affiliate club - from which can be provided suitably experienced personnel for the inspection of pigeons submitted for competition. (ie club committee).
- 5.2 Only pigeons of sound health and physical wellbeing and likely to successfully complete the journey set for the event will be accepted by the club committee for entry.
- 5.3 Poor pigeon health and pigeon neglect can be characterised by general lassitude and loss of body weight. This may be an indication of:
 - 5.3.1 Respiratory disease - indicated by wheezing, sneezing, nasal and eye discharge (i.e. chlamydia infection)
 - 5.3.2 Pigeon Pox lesions – indicated by pox lesions
 - 5.3.3 Canker – indicated by cheesy lesions and or wet droppings
 - 5.3.4 Any other ailment to which pigeons are susceptible – indicated by poor feather condition, loss of weight general lassitude
 - 5.3.5 Neglect includes the pigeon being presented in a soiled and generally dishevelled condition (dirty feathers and obvious ailment) and/or harbouring external parasites.
 - 5.3.6 Physical Impairment. Physical impairment includes any condition, likely to diminish the likelihood of a racing pigeon successfully completing a set journey. -in which case veterinary consultation is recommended.

6 CARRIAGE AND CONVEYANCE OF PIGEONS

6.1 Container Specifications

- 6.1.1 Configuration - a person, club, or association responsible for the carriage of pigeons must ensure they are transported in a container, allowing adequate air exchange at the sides and top. 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.
- 6.1.2 Height Allowance - the minimum recommended height of containers is 21 cm (210mm) recommended and is exclusive of all wire and plastic mesh bottom inserts.

- 6.1.3 Space per Pigeon - the space allowance per pigeon will vary according to the duration of transport, the distance of the race and whether provision must be made to feed and water the pigeons en route and at the release site – see Clause 6.2 below.
- 6.2 **Space Provisions for Race birds.** A person conveying a pigeon must ensure the cages meet the following standards. The allowance is made on the following basis:
 - 6.2.1 For general short-term carriage (less than 2 hours) – a minimum of 200 sq cm (100mm* 200mm) per pigeon is recommended.
 - 6.2.2 For race training (on the day release) and races where travel is overnight and the race release is next day, a minimum of 300 sq cm (150mm*200mm) per pigeon is recommended.,
 - 6.2.3 For races where travel is extended, and race release requires two or more nights in the race basket – a minimum of 400 sq cm (200mm*200mm) per pigeon is recommended.
 - 6.2.4 For the current SAHPA Geraldty race crates (1050mm*850 mm), these area dimensions allow race crate numbers as follows
 - (a) race training and overnight travel – 30 race birds per crate
 - (b) travel over two or more days – 22 race birds per crate

7 FEED AND WATER PROVISIONS UNDER RACE CONDITIONS

- 7.1 Short Journeys - race release the day after hampering. Water is to be available from the start to the finish of loading of birds onto the race unit
- 7.2 Longer Journeys - race release the second or subsequent days after hampering.
 - 7.2.1 Water is to be available from the start to the finish during the period of loading of birds onto the race unit.
 - 7.2.2 If the race unit travels during the night of loading, the convoyer must stop enroute (to the race site) from approximately 7:00am to 9:00am (to water the birds) on the morning following hampering. The transporter should aim to arrive at the release site by 1600 hours on the day before the race release, at which time feed and water procedures are to commence.
 - (a) The feed must be accessible to the birds for a minimum of one (1) hour.
 - (b) The water shall be available continuously until one hour before release.

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

- 8.1 Annual Programmed Race Fixtures.
 - 8.1.1 The SAHPA COM is required to provide a yearly race program for SAHPA members. Such races are to be conducted under the SAHPA Inc Constitution and Rules – which includes this code of practice.
- 8.2 Race Controls.
 - 8.2.1 Pigeon racing under the SAHPA Inc is to be planned, operated, and controlled by the SAHPA COM, the appointed personnel (release panel, convoyer, transporter driver, toss drivers/convoyers etc), and according to the SAHPA Inc Rules 1, 2, 3, 4 under the SAHPA Inc Constitution. Member clubs and SAHPA members are bound by these rules.

- 8.3 Rain, or Fog, or Heat and or High Winds
 - 8.3.1 Pigeons must not be released away from the home loft (toss training or race release) into rain or fog.
 - 8.3.2 Heat - When temperature conditions are expected to be above 30C degrees at any location enroute to release point or flying home, a holdover shall be declared, or the race cancelled.
 - 8.3.3 Release Time - During the months of May to August pigeons are to be released as follows:
 - (a) Under clear sky conditions – release a minimum of 15 minutes after gazetted sunrise for the area.
 - (b) Under over-cast sky conditions – release a minimum of 30 minutes after gazetted sunrise for the area.
 - 8.3.4 During the months of September and October pigeons are to be released as follows:
 - (a) Under clear sky conditions – release at the discretion of the release panel chairman and convoyer.
 - (b) Under over-cast sky conditions – release a minimum of 30 minutes after gazetted sunrise for the area.
- 8.4 Release of pigeons near airports - owners, conyoyers, pigeon handlers etc shall not release pigeons at or near airports or in a line of flight that may result in the pigeons overflying an airport facility.

9 PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUGS: DRUG FREE RACING

- 9.1 A person must not administer any performance enhancing drug to a racing pigeon. This includes (but not limited to) any of the anabolic steroids or corticosteroids or other 'stimulant drug'. Any pigeons found sick or dead at the release site can, at the discretion of the Management Committee, be sent for analysis. Where any performance enhancing substance is detected, the owner(s) will be held responsible – and be liable for all testing costs and SAHPA penalties (for bringing the sport into disrepute).
- 9.2 Any person found guilty of administering performance enhancing drugs to their birds or being an accomplice to administering performance enhancing drugs to race pigeons may be prosecuted under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2001.
- 9.3 The SAHPA COM reserves the right to have member's birds tested for any performance drugs. As such
 - 9.3.1 Routine tests may be conducted at any time and any members refusing to have his/her birds tested will be in breach of this rule and will be automatically disqualified from racing until such time as his/her birds have been proven to be free of any performance enhancing substances.
 - 9.3.2 In the case of a clearly positive result all costs shall be borne by the offender. If the result is negative all charges in respect of the testing will be borne by the SAHPA.
 - 9.3.3 Medical treatment may not be used as justification should the result prove positive.

- 9.3.4 Once the test has been finalized and the result established, a copy of the result shall be forwarded to the member/s in question and another copy to be placed in the hands of the SAHPA COM.
- 9.4 Procedure for Sample Preparation
 - 9.4.1 A sample shall be taken by a minimum of two SAHPA COM nominated persons in the presence of the owner and or his nominee.
 - 9.4.2 Only the authorized test kit supplied by an authorised testing laboratory shall be used.
 - 9.4.3. The procedure for sample collection shall as per the authorised laboratory instructions.
 - 9.4.4 Samples for testing are to be sent by first class post to the authorised testing laboratory.

10 THE PIGEON LOFT

- 10.1 Dimensions - Pigeon lofts are constructed in many shapes and sizes to suit or fit individual circumstances within a conventional residential block. However, the owner of a pigeon must ensure the following minimum standards are met:
 - 10.1.1 The Race Loft - The minimum space required for each bird must be 0.092 m 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 1800 mm (width) x 2100 mm (length) x 3 1800 mm (height) = 6.804 m³ divided by 0.092 m³ = maximum 74 pigeons and minimum 81 box perches.
- 10.2 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 wellbeing – an attached flyout is recommended.
 - 10.2.1 Stock Loft Breed Boxes - breeding compartments are to be provided. Required minimum dimensions (for individual pairs) for breeding compartments are 550 mm wide x 450 mm high x 500 mm deep. Adequate space to maintain health and wellbeing of pigeons within the breeding loft is calculated as two and one half (2.5) times the provision for race birds. The maximum allowable number is calculated from the above example as follows:
 - (a) Loft dimensions 1800 mm wide x 2100 mm long x 1800 mm high = 6.804m³ divided by (0.092m³ x 2.5)
 - (b) space allocated for racing birds = 30 pigeons, (or 15 mated pairs) for the space provided.
 - 10.2.2 The Ideal Loft - The following is provided only as a guide but reflects the hallmarks of a well organised and well-constructed pigeon race loft. There are several 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 building lot so the front of the loft faces away from prevailing winter winds and rain, whilst making full advantage of access to winter sun.

- 10.2.3 Ventilation There needs to be adequate air exchange within a pigeon race 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 'witch 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.

10.3 Preferred Construction (Recommended)

- 10.3.1 Lofts constructed prior to this Code of Practice being enacted (but approved as 'suitable for use' by an experienced SAHPA member) may not conform to this Code of Practice. New or upgraded lofts should be constructed in accordance with the following minimum standards and in accordance with local council government requirements.
- 10.3.2 Off Ground Lofts. 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 eg chip board, or plywood.
- 10.3.3 On Ground Lofts - Where possible all new lofts constructed on-ground should 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.
- 10.3.4 Flyout 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.
- 10.3.5 Insulation - where external cladding of a loft consists of brick or metal such lofts may be internally lined with plywood, or chipboard, or other heat retaining materials. For prevention of condensation and general dampness, all metal roofs should be insulated.

11 LOFT CLEANING

Loft floors are to be cleaned on a regular basis – protective equipment (PPE) should be utilised by the person cleaning the loft – face mask and dust coat. This includes lofts with 'deep litter' – which must be kept dry and raked regularly to ensure cleanliness.

12 FEED AND WATER

The owner of race pigeons must ensure the following standards are met:

- 12.1 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 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.
- 12.2 Water - Clean water in the home loft - available always. 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.

13 STRAY BIRD MANAGEMENT

The SAHPA COM and club affiliates recognise appropriate management of lost, or injured pigeons (belonging to members) is a key requirement of our code of practice.

- 13.1 The SAHPA has a website facility and a ring secretary to report lost, strayed, or injured race pigeons.
- 13.2 The SAHPA ring secretary shall monitor the reporting facilities, collect the race bird details and location and advise the relevant SAHPA owner within 24 hrs.
- 13.3 The contacted SAHPA member is required to contact the person reporting the race pigeon location and arrange for collection within 24hrs.
- 13.4 The contacted SAHPA member shall confirm with the ring secretary that collection or transfer has been completed.
- 13.5 Non-adherence to these procedures relating to lost bird acknowledgement and collection will be viewed very seriously and may result in suspension or cancellation of membership.

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

14 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The South Australian Homing Pigeon Association acknowledges the requirements of the Animal Welfare provisions of the Australian and South Australian governments, and the recommendations from the Australian National Racing Pigeon Board to the framing of this Code of Practice.