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Module 6: Health

The key ingredients of a champion racing pigeon;

1 tsp fitness, 1 tsp training, 1 cup of health. Mix well and add to racing schedule as necessary.

Overview

Entire books have been devoted to health. Why? Because it is a key ingredient to racing success. As discussed under breeding, what we have in our lofts is potential. The best pigeon under a poor handler will not attain 100% of it's potential. Likewise an average pigeon under a superior handler may attain 100% of it's potential which may far exceed the best performance of a poor handler. The pillars of success are genetics, health, nutrition, fitness, training, management and motivation.

Health is an ingredient that should have just as much if not more attention than training, breeding and racing systems. I am not an expert in this area and rely on information collected from such sources as the few dedicated pigeon veterinarians our sport is truly honored to have amongst our number, such as Dr. Colin Walker and Dr. David Marx, and information published by such sources as the Racing Pigeon Digest and the Internet.

This section is to provide a basic understanding. It will provide an example of my health regimen and a basic understanding of what health issues we are constantly striving to prevent or deter. If you have a serious problem in your loft, seek out a professional. It is money very well spent.

Here is my short list as to what I consider important regarding health,

- 1. Clean healthy loft**
- 2. Clean fresh water daily**

I live in the country and have well water. I add a small amount of chlorine to the water which is changed daily. If you live in the city, you don't have to worry about it as chlorine is most likely already added to your water supply. In addition to this regardless if I am using covered water pans or if I am using automatic waterers, all water dispensing items are cleaned and scrubbed with warm soapy water daily. I think this is one of the most important things that can be done to prevent disease.

If you have the automatic water types with the jug that sits on top, you need to clean the inside of the jug daily. They have been made to make watering for several days convenient. I use them in the summer when water consumption is way up as the temperature is in the 90's or even over 100 degrees. Mine can hold up to 2 gallons of water. If you are using them when water consumption is low, it's very tempting to skip a day, but you really should be diligent and change and clean it daily. I use two sets so I

have a clean on to up into the loft every day and I clean the one removed shortly after or before I switch out the next day.

3. Clean good quality food given in a proper feeder hop

4. Preventive medications

There have been many written arguments about the heavy use of antibiotics. I also believe this is true. But I still think that routine worming and canker preventives are important. I also am an advocate for the use of probiotics on a regular basis especially after medicating.

5. Vaccinations

I believe in vaccinating for PMV-1 and Paratyphoid. I have at times not vaccinated for pox, but I think pox vaccinations should be done as well.

6. Selection based on health

I sure that disease resistance or a healthy immune system or lack of one is a genetic trait and like all other traits it can be used for selection purposes.

My Health Regimen

The following is my personal health regimen. There are many other examples to be found. Medications that I use have many alternatives. Depending on where you live, there may be brands that are more effective that are sold on the market. Also depending on your climate your concerns may be different.

Here in Nebraska, we have extreme dry cold, wet cold, frequent thaws and freezes, dry and hot weather in all seasons and dry and damp weather in all seasons. This is a very tough environment as there is no consistency and sometimes the rapid change in extremes is tough on the pigeons and makes maintaining a healthy loft environment difficult.

Food and Water Dispensers

Water dispensers

I use the bottom of 5 gallon plastic buckets cut to hold approximately 1 gallon of water. The water is covered with a round metal cage cover. Unlike the enclosed dust free water dispensers the waterer pans will get dirty from feathers. I like these better because I can easily wash each pan with hot water and soap daily. Also I found the enclosed dust free dispensers to be difficult and time consuming to fill and carry when doing more than one section. I think it's IMPORTANT to wash drinking dispensers daily. When giving water, I add Clorox to the water UNLESS I am adding medication or supplements. NEVER add Clorox or bleach to water in combination with medications.

In Nebraska when the temperature drops below freezing it is also necessary to keep the water heated (just enough to prevent freezing but not actually create "warm" water). My water warmers are hand made using a wooden box, with a coffee can inserted in the middle. Inside the coffee can is a light fixture and holds a light bulb no greater than 40 watts. The light bulb sits approx 2-3 inches below the base of the pan. One DANGER is if the temperature is above freezing and you have too high of a wattage of light bulb, you could melt your pan which could lead to a fire.

Food dispensers "feeders"

My birds are fed in wooden covered troughs. At times they are hand fed, but only on a clean freshly scraped. There is never food left over in the feeders. If food is left over you are over feeding your pigeons. Feed sitting out can also attract vermin such as mice into your loft. Keeping feeders free of excess food prevents birds from eating soiled feed.

Baths

Baths -- I give my birds baths during the warm weather once a week. I give them lukewarm water with a hand full of Epsom salt and a hand full of Borax. The only exception is I do not bath the birds the day of shipping. The combination of Borax and Epsom salt helps keep the birds free of mites, lice and pigeon flies.

Preventive Medications

Worms

I recommend treating for worms every 3 weeks. I use 3 in 1 Multi Mix Powder from Foys which also treats for Canker, Coccidiosis and worms. Before this I used Ivomec drench.

Canker

Since going to the Multi mix combo, I also give this ever 3 weeks. When racing the birds drink out of a common water dispenser on the race truck which can expose them. A greater danger is birds stopping on a race and drinking from creeks or pools of water. (Evidence by mud on the bottoms of their feet)

Coccidiosis

Also included with the multi mix a preventive is given in the water every three weeks.

In the spring before breeding and racing and again in the fall treat the birds for 5 days with a combination of Aureomycin and Tylan. Both can be combined in the water.

After giving any medications in the water, it is followed the next day with probiotics.

Vaccinations

I vaccinate for Paramyxovirus (PMV), Paratyphoid and Pox annually.

I prefer PMV-1 vaccine for PMV, Sal-Bac for Paratyphoid.

Supplements

Probiotics

administered in the water the day after medicating with any type of antibiotics or multi mix medications

Brewer's Yeast

given in the water once a week.

Vitamins w/ electrolytes after returning from a race.

Classifying Injuries

This section covers injuries to birds. Unfortunately, it's the nature of racing and training that our birds covering the distance that they do will incur injuries. We have to remember that we manage a stable of race animals and we have to consider many things, injuries being one of them. This is not intended to be the 101 on how to provide medical care for all injuries. Some injuries are repairable, some are not. Some a bird can come back from and perform 100%, others they can not. Some will end a racing career but will allow for a bird to perform in the stock loft, some will not. We have to take these into consideration when we evaluate injuries.

Pigeons are remarkable healers. It almost at times seems that they have been granted a special gift for being healed from major injuries. There have been birds that have come home with gun shot wounds or nearly mortal wounded by hawks. I have saved a few directly from the clutches of the hawk. The hawk flew away to come prey on my birds another day and the bird ended up surviving, always remarkably to my astonishment.

Classes of Injuries

- **Class A** -- Major injuries that will affect a birds ability to survive.
- **Class B** -- Major injuries that will end a birds ability to race, but not be life threatening
- **Class C** -- Injuries that will temporarily prevent a bird from racing, but will hamper their ability to give 100% of their original potential
- **Class D** -- Injuries that will temporarily prevent a bird from racing but the bird will recuperate and can give 100%
- **Class E** -- Very minor injuries

Examples of the Classes of Injuries

- **Class A** -- A bird returns with the top mandible of it's beak missing, deep lacerations that puncture air sacs or major organs.
- **Class B** -- A broken wing

- **Class C** -- A broken keel or broken leg
- **Class D** -- Bruising of the wing or pectoral area, bent keel but not broken
- **Class E** -- Minor cuts that do not penetrate air sacs, loss of many feathers, abrasions to the chest area that result in loss of feathers and skin

Appropriate Actions for each class

- Class A -- In this case, do the right thing. In the example of the missing mandible, euthanasia is probably the best action. These honorable creatures deserve our respect and our mercy.
- 2. Class B -- The appropriate question if is this bird is intended for the stock loft. If it has not yet performed but physically has met your standards and has an incredible pedigree, you may want to give it a chance in the stock loft. Realize though if you already own both parents of this bird in the stock loft, it's probably best to remove this bird from the race team. Better to put your faith in other offspring able to prove they have the unseen qualities than to roll the dice with this bird. If you evaluate a bird to have a class B injury but it is not a candidate for the stock loft, euthanasia is most likely the appropriate decision.
- 3. Class C -- I'm sure there will be plenty of fanciers to disagree with my assessment of a Class C injury. A bird that has a broken keel or a broken leg with proper treatment will heal and can compete. From experience though I have never had one that has turned into a champion. I have never read of one that has turned into a champion. Very rarely you will read of one that was already a champion and then was injured and moved to the stock loft. A class C injury should be handled the same as a Class B injury. If the bird is intended for the stock loft, do so. If it is not then remove it from the race team.
- 4. Class D -- Often fanciers will miss Class D injuries. You have to handle your birds after they return from a race. You have to observe them in the loft. Our birds often collide with wires, trees and other objects. If a bird has enough of a collision that is bruises a bird then immediately place them on the injured reserve list. Bruising is a sign of healing. A bird can not give you 100% while it's injured, so don't waste your time and money shipping them to a race if they can not give 100%. Give them sufficient time to heal, some remedial training tosses and then return them to the team. There are lots of race winners and diploma winners that have had minor injuries and come back to score. A bird with a class D injury can potentially come back and give 100%. Also the other side of this coin is that some birds also come back to race but never attain the level that they previously have. If this happens the following season, evaluate this injury as though it was a Class C injury. Do not keep clinging on to hope that they will return to their former glory. Unfortunately, sometimes this class of injury does not end their ability to race, but it ends their ability to be a winner.
- 5. Class E -- Should be treated exactly like Class D injuries. Give them time to heal. Be patient and pay attention. They may act like they are 100%, but ensure they are fully recovered before

shipping to a race. I repeat this hundreds of times, but don't ship a bird unless it can give you 100% of what it is capable of. I do not think Class E injuries hamper a birds ability to give you 100% after they have fully recovered.

Summary

Why do we classify injuries? We classify them so that we can evaluate what a birds future on the team will be and take the appropriate action. Often we spend lot so of time and money when if we properly evaluated, we would have discovered it was not the right course of action. My father always said everything deserves a chance. I agree to a point. I have spent many times giving chances or leaving hope, only to realize that a bird would never be capable of winning or scoring 100% again. We keep a stable of race animals. We want to keep as many winners or contenders as possible. Don't waste your time keeping also rans. Remember what your goals are, be efficient in attaining them. When injuries occur, evaluate the injury, classify the injury, then evaluate the birds future placement and take the appropriate action.

The Moul

The moul is one aspect of racing that is very under estimated. There are facts and myths associated with it. It's important to racing and to showing of pigeons. Fanciers agree that feather quality and structure are one of the most important traits for which we select. But neglecting the moul, or not paying attention to it, or not giving the birds what they need during the moul is a grave error of pigeon management. This section is an attempt to covering the moul in an effective manner.

The Natural Process

The moul is the natural process where a bird replaces feathers with new ones. Feathers suffer wear and tear over time and must be replaced. If you handle a pigeon you will notice there are many different kinds of feathers all distinct from each other. Each of these feathers as a function and are moulted differently.

1. **Down Feathers:** These are the yellow hair like feathers observed on a squab immediately at birth. These feathers are kept until 4-6 weeks of age. Some genetic traits such as dilute can be identified by these feathers, short down versus long downed birds. I have never kept records of down versus performance. It might be an interesting experimnet to make records of down on youngsters. When you observe down feathers you have to wonder what purpose they serve. They surely can not keep a bird warm as it does not completely cover their skin. I have a theory that down feathers do the opposite and help keep them cool. The down feathers create space between the squab and the parents body while brooding. I think this creates a minuscule air pocket that allows air to penetrate and to keep the youngster cooler. It's just a theory, and in the grand scheme of things, it doesn't matter. Just my best guess.

2. **Hair Feathers:** Similar to down feathers. They exist on a mature pigeon underneath the contour feathers. I have had some birds that have hair feathers that protrude in the chest area. They are thin, look like a hair except they fan out slightly at their end.
3. **Fluff Feathers:** These are the small fluffy feathers on a bird that can be found all over the body except the wings. When you handle a difficult pigeon they sometimes come out. When a bird excretes and is healthy you will often find fluff feathers in the middle of the droppings. Often they are erroneously called down feathers. They have a very tiny shaft and are very fluffy like a small piece of cotton.
4. **Contour Feathers:** All the following are classified as contour feathers, but they have different functions and I consider them separately from each other.
 - **Body Feathers:** the feathers covering the body of the pigeon. When a bird fluffs up such as after a bath or when it's cold you can easily distinguish them.
 - **Coverts (mantles):** These are the feathers that are located above and below the flight feathers of the wing and the tail feathers.
 - **Secondaries:** The secondaries are located on the wing next in line from the 10 flight feathers, closest to the body. These are extremely important as they give a pigeon buoyancy in the air. The flight feathers slice through the air on the upstroke and then grab the air for thrust on the down stroke. The secondaries utilize the motion forward by creating lift much like an aircraft wing.
 - **Flight Feathers:** See the description for secondaries.
 - **Tail Feathers:** Like a rudder on a boat it steers a pigeon and also contributes to maintaining lift from the forward motion and keeping the bird airborne.

Manipulation

Birds moult their feathers based on the time of the year. This is determined by the length of day light. Long before this was realized and turned into our modern light systems, it was noted during the war. Noted in the book Pigeon Lore by A. Neilson Hutton copyright 1962 it was observed that pigeons born in the Northern hemisphere in England that had just finished their moult were sent to Northern Africa in the Southern hemisphere and immediately began their moult again. To the pigeons, the time of year had changed and their physiological response was to begin the moult again in preparation for the winter they were going to experience in the opposite hemisphere. Fanciers discovered this affect on the moult could also be created using artificial light in the loft. Later it was discovered the same could be done by deprivation of light. These two systems are called the light system and the darkening system in young birds.

On the light system, birds are born under 16-18 hours of light, creating the illusion that they are born mid summer, so the birds mature quicker and are more mature, almost like yearlings when the races begin. Under this system, sometimes the last two flights are pulled and forced to grow in. On the darkening system the birds are deprived of light causing them to think it's late winter, thus they will drop all their body feathers but not their first set of flights. Both systems have their pros and cons. I am only experienced in the lighting system and have never tried the darkening system. The point is that moulting can be manipulated. Any change in light conditions usually requires two weeks for the birds to adapt to the new time frame of light. One day here or there will not create response.

The Moulting is The Beginning of Your Next Season

Old birds will moult and replace their flight feathers during the race season. Most believe the slower the flights are replaced the better for racing. The flights they then moult and replace this year along with all the rest of the contour feathers, will be the feathers they will race with next year. Feathers take wear and tear and are affected by things such as a poor diet, illness, extreme cold, pests, etc. Health is not just important in training and racing, it is super important all year round. With this in mind, even though the old bird races are over or the young bird races are finishing, it's already the beginning of the next race season, because you are responsible for the health and conditions that will be reflected in the moult.

The moult is a trait that can be documented, used for selection and manipulated through breeding

Regardless of the system used birds moult at a natural rate. Observing your birds carefully when they are under the same conditions will show that they do not all moult at the same rate. The rate at which birds moult is somewhat genetically predetermined. By keeping records of the moult of individual birds, one can make this a trait for which can be selected and breeding can influence. Keep in mind, there are other factors that can influence the moult.

Things that can effect the moult.

1. Manipulation of lights, as mentioned previously
2. Breeding, when a pair of birds broods their second round will usually trigger the moulting process
3. Stress, the more stress a bird is under, such as heavy training, hard racing, etc. can slow down the moult
4. Health, birds that are super healthy will moult slower
5. Forced moulting, quite simply, if you pull a feather, it will be replaced.

Nutrition During The Moul

Racing pigeons require different nutrition for different distances of races. A well balanced diet is always necessary as birds also get their vitamins and minerals from their diet. Some portions of the moulting process will occur during the racing season and the nutritional requirements for racing will supersede nutrition necessary for the moul. During the heaviest portion of the moul in the fall the birds will require more protein in their diet because of the mass replacement of the body feathers. Even though it is the end of the race season, it is better to provide good quality food, rather than save a buck and put them on cheap food since racing is over.

Summary

The moul is extremely important in racing and off season as well. The moul is effected by diet, health, training, stress and can be artificially manipulated. The moul is also a trait that can be recorded and selected upon. A bad moul can end a race season before it ever began.

Strays and Feral Pigeons

What is the difference between a stray and a feral pigeon?

In reality there is no difference. In a feral pigeon, you know they have never been vaccinated. You know they do not receive preventive medication. You know there is a chance they have been exposed to diseases you do not want in your loft. You know there is a chance that they are carriers of diseases you do not want in your loft. You know they most likely do not come from the healthiest environment. What about the stray? It's owner may not vaccinate. It's owner may not provide preventive medication. You don't know if there is a chance they have been exposed to or be carriers of diseases you do not want in your loft. You don't know if they come from a healthy environment. You can not take the chance and treat strays and feral pigeons differently.

What do I do if I find a feral pigeon in my loft?

Immediately remove the feral pigeon. Separate it into another building. Immediately wash your hand after handling a feral pigeon. Do not handle your birds until you have washed your hands after handling a feral pigeon. As soon as possible take it many miles away and release it. If it is feral, it knows how to survive as it has been part of the wild already. It may have some homing instinct but as long as you have not fed it and watered it and introduced it to your loft, which surely seemed like a paradise. It most likely will not return. If it does return, repeat the toss a different direction. If it still returns, eliminate it as it is a health risk to your loft and could be a very dangerous bio-hazard.

What do I do if I find a stray racing pigeon in my loft?

Follow the same procedure as far as removing it, washing your hands etc. Attempt to find the owner if the bird is too run down to immediately toss. If the bird is in good condition, keep it quarantined, feed and water it for several days and release it a few miles away from your loft. If you contact the owner

and he does not want the bird, do NOT keep it. Put it in a live stock auction, eliminate it, give it away, but do NOT introduce it to your racing or stock loft.

BIOSECURITY!!! You can NOT afford to take chances beyond those already inherent to racing.

Bio-security

What is meant by "Bio-security"?

Bio-security is the security measures taken to protect ourselves and our birds from biological threats. What is a biological threat? For our purposes, a biological threat is the possibility of our birds contracting a contagious disease or viral infection introduced from outside our own loft. Bio-security steps are taken to reduce the risk of a disease or threat within our loft. Note steps taken to attain excellent or super health within our loft is just one stage towards bio-security. When the immune systems of our birds are down, many secondary infections may occur which may have been present but undetectable as healthy birds would not be susceptible to a disease. The circovirus is one such example. It greatly reduces the immune system of young birds and they then are affected by secondary ailments such as canker, PMV, etc. See Pigeon Diseases

The fancier

You are one single organism. You are susceptible to various diseases, viruses etc. Some do not affect the birds, some may. Some diseases that they may become afflicted with may also affect you, most wont. You have to remember that their health is also paramount to yours. You are at some risk just by the nature of being a pigeon keeper. It may not cross your mind, but there are plenty of fanciers that have been diagnosed with pigeon lung and were forced out of the sport that they loved dearly.

The loft

In a pigeon loft, the birds drink from community waterers, community feeders and they come in contact with the droppings of other birds. They share the same space and breath the same air. We need to think of our loft as one huge community of organisms. What affects one, can and may affect all. We have to take diligent steps on the loft level to protect ourselves and our birds.

The club

Our birds are placed into training crates and race crates with birds from other lofts in our club. Especially for long distance races the birds will spend up to 3-4 days in this environment. During this time, they share the same space as birds from other lofts, come in contact with droppings from other lofts, they breath the same air and most likely they will be allowed to drink from a community waterter. During this time, our community of birds is expanded and they are exposed to much more than what is in our control in our loft.

The combine or federation

The same factors exist as within the club level, but on a much larger scale. The larger the number of lofts a bird is exposed to, the larger the bio-hazard risk.

As a sport

As a sport, the risk is shared in competition, during the exchange of young birds in futurities or sales, during shows, during club activities, through the sales and trade of birds. Look at the current steps taken by state governments and you will find that they are monitoring poultry that is sold and exchanged at stock markets. We have to be diligent as fanciers to reduce our risk not just for own loft, but for our sport. It would not take much for some highly contagious bio-hazard that can be passed from birds to humans to enter a low quality loft in the United States. If this were to happen, I'm sure all of pigeon racing would end. Lofts would go into quarantine. The sport would be dormant for years. Not to mention that many lofts would have birds by the masses euthanized and the lofts burned to the ground. Does anyone want this to happen? Those of us that don't should do what we can to maintain a high level of bio-security because it is the right and best thing to do.

When are we at risk?

We are at risk when ever we allow our birds out of the loft to fly. We are at risk anytime an intruder, stray of feral pigeon lands on our loft or enters it. We are at risk any time we allow others to handle our birds or we handle birds from another loft. We are at risk when we place our birds with birds from other lofts such as club training or club races. We are at risk just by the level of security we maintain in our own loft. We are at risk often, or more accurately, we are ALWAYS at risk.

What steps can we take towards bio-security

Things we can do to increase our bio-security include but are not limited to:

1. Keeping as clean of a loft as possible
2. Administering preventive medications
3. Vaccinate, for everything the FDA allows us to, PMV, Pox, Paratyphoid, etc. (The best thing the U.S. Govt could EVER do is have the FDA approve vaccines for homing pigeons based on them not being poultry intended for consumption. THIS is the number one reason why there are vaccines available over seas that we can not get in the U.S. If we had them, the bio-security of the nation would be increased)
4. Removing and quarantining sick pigeons immediately
5. Removing and quarantining strays and feral pigeons
6. Removing and quarantining birds that are late from races
7. Washing your hands after handling your own birds, some one else's birds, feral pigeons etc.

8. Washing your hands after leaving the loft and before entering the loft
9. Wearing shoes or boots in the loft and not wearing them into your house, droppings get into the soles of your shoes and can contain and pass along bio-hazards
10. Clean water changed at least twice daily. If not medicating, I add Chlorine to my water
11. Clean feed
12. Educate and encourage other fanciers to increase their bio-security
13. Wear a ventilator in the loft
14. Have a well ventilated dry loft
15. Keeping any feral wild birds such as sparrows, starlings, etc out of your loft
16. Keeping mice and other vermin out of your loft
17. Wearing a loft coat

These are just a few, but I'm sure you are getting the idea. We incur risks by the nature of our sport. So we should do what we can to reduce our risks. For more ideas go to the AU website and review the AU Loft Certification Program .

Mites, Lice and Pigeon Fly's

Mites and Lice

Mites and Lice are a common problem for racing pigeons. They can become contaminated from other birds while in race crates, from feral pigeons or while pecking around in the yard. Both mite and lice are parasitic, meaning they feed off of the host, in our case the pigeon.

Lice eat pigeon feathers. You can see the small holes in the veins of flight feathers. Lice will look like a thin brown fleck. Upon closer inspection, you will realize it is a louse. Lice have six legs. After handling a bird that is infested, often lice can end up attached to your clothing. There are many different types of lice. The names, feather louse, wing louse, etc. have been dubbed depending on what area of the body they primarily like to inhabit. They live their entire lives on the pigeon and lay their eggs on their host. They will leave their host only to infest another bird.

Treatment

The treatment and prevention for them is the same. There are powders and sprays. I have even seen some suggestions that wormer added to the bath water will help. I just don't see it healthy for a bird to bathe in wormer.

I use a stable spray that contains Pyrethrum. In the old days, I would spray all over the pigeon and soak the bird, soak myself, and body feathers would always pull out as my hands ended up wet. This is not healthy. My friend, Chuck gave me some insight that I've used ever since. He stated that lice make a trip to the anus of a pigeon for water. (I have no idea if this is true). He said all you have to do is spray the rear of the pigeon under the tail feathers and the lice will disappear. I tried it and it worked. So, now when I have a mild infestation, that is what I do. Also though, when I find one pigeon with a louse, I spray all the birds. The other thing is to treat the birds at least twice a year even if you do not see any lice. Body lice can be on a pigeon and not be seen.

Mites are more dangerous to the health of a pigeon than lice. They feed upon the blood of a pigeon and like other insects that feed upon blood, they can carry diseases. Unlike the louse that lives on the house, the mite lives in dark recesses of the loft and comes out at night to feed on the host. By its nature, a mite can feed on several different hosts over time. They also feed on other types of birds which is why there is always the threat of them passing on disease even if they inhabit a "healthy" loft.

The only way to combat mites is to clean the loft often and regularly disinfect the loft with a mild insecticide and to pain surfaces with insecticide mixed in. Using perch oil also may help. The cleaner you keep a loft, the better chances you have to control mites. Like the louse, there a number of species.

The pigeon fly

This is a fly that also sucks the blood of pigeons. It is flat and hides under the plumage. The pigeon fly is very fast and hard to detect. Just like louse, spraying them with Pyrethrum helps. If you detect pigeon flies, put the birds on regular spraying weekly until the infestation disappears. Just like mites, since they are blood suckers, there is always the chance they can pass along disease.

The Importance of Record Keeping

Record keeping extremely important in race pigeons. Normally, when one thinks of record keeping they think of the basic pedigree. Record keeping goes beyond a pedigree. Accurate record keeping allows you to establish a compilation of data. This data can then be analyzed to discover new things. Decisions can then be made based on data and not on theories or guesses. Here are examples of necessary or desired record keeping.

Breeding Records

Breeding records are one of the most important records you will keep. Breeding records though when supplemented with other good record keeping skills can enhance a pedigree with accuracy. This is the basic information that you should record in regards to breeding records.

1. Sire and Dam
2. round number
3. date eggs are laid

4. date eggs hatch
5. date youngsters are banded
6. band numbers of youngsters
7. date youngsters are weaned
8. physical observations about each youngster, short down, uncommon nasal, slow development, etc.
9. color of youngster

Racing Records

If you have a program such as Pigeon Management System (PMS5.0 or better) or Hawkeye Loft Management system by Comproware, then keeping accurate race records is easy and analyzing data is much easier. The following should be recorded in the race record for each bird. Using this data you may discover that a certain bird scored in a certain nest condition. This would allow you to set up the bird into the same nesting condition for the same distance on another race or the following season. You may discover that your birds score in certain weather conditions but not others. The performance is important to also add to the pedigree. If your bird is a prize, diploma or race winner, be sure to update that on the record of the Sire, Dam, Grand Sires and Grand Dams. You can also go one step further and update the records of the Great Grands, but this can lead to a lot of work.

1. race date
2. race distance
3. race conditions, weather, wind, temp etc.
4. release time
5. arrival time
6. speed
7. loft position
8. club position
9. federation position
10. combine position
11. points earned
12. diplomas won

13. race winner

14. winning speed

15. Nesting condition

- celibacy
- widowhood cock
- widowhood hen
- natural system
 - i. unmated
 - ii. cock driving hen
 - iii. driven hen
 - iv. sitting on eggs 1-6 days old
 - v. sitting on eggs 7-12 days old
 - vi. sitting on eggs 13-18 days old
 - vii. eggs pipping
 - viii. youngsters 1-7 days old
 - ix. youngsters 8-14 days
 - x. youngsters 15-21 days
 - xi. youngsters 21-28 days old
 - xii. on eggs, mate removed
 - xiii. race bird removed 1-2 days before shipping
 - xiv. jealousy used
 - xv. return condition
 - xvi. position in the moult
 - xvii. notations of physical condition when shipping (will help you establish what are the signs of form in your loft)

Season Records

The things you do during the race season also need to be recorded. If you have a successful year, you may want to duplicate your actions, but if you do not record them, it's next to impossible to duplicate them the following year. This is especially true if you are always changing the way you do things. Here are some of the notations that are important.

1. date of medications and vaccines administered
2. type of feeding each day
3. type of training or exercise given to the birds, weather it is loft flying, flag flying, road training etc.
4. dates major events happened such as pairing up for natural, splitting cocks and hens for widowhood etc.
5. Preparations for shipping
 1. time birds were fed
 2. what you fed them
 3. if you took grit away
 4. what time you put hens/cocks together for widowhood
 5. when you crated before going to the club
1. Weather conditions

Conclusion

You can have records of what ever is important to you. The fancier who keeps consistent and accurate records is ten steps ahead of the fancier who does not. Record you data, don't throw it away. Put your season records in a binder. You never know when you will want to go back, look at what you have done, or duplicate it. Sometimes we try new things and decide it wasn't a move forward. Record your data. Be diligent and you will have the power of information in your hand.

Dosage Conversion Table

When I first started administering vaccinations I found myself confused when I had a medication that listed the dosage in millileters and I had a syringe that had markings for cc's. At iVillage I had found a nice conversion table and decided to include this for others who are confused.

cc's stand for cubic centimeters

ml's stand for millileters

one cc = one ml

one teaspoon = 5 cc = 5 ml

one Tablespoon = 15 cc = 15 ml

one Tablespoon = 3 teaspoons

one ounce = 30 cc = 30 ml = 2 tablespoons = 6 teaspoons

8 ounces = 240 cc = 240 ml