

Strong Youngsters Are Essential

If a successful racing season is to follow, it is vital that every squeaker bred in the ensuing year leaves the nest in 100 p.c. condition — 90 p.c. is not just good enough.

The first four weeks from the moment it is hatched until it is ready to leave the nest, is the most important stage in the life of a racing pigeon.

The well-grown healthy youngster is a picture of robust beauty, sound and clean in feather, usually well covered in down, strong and sturdy on its legs, and always eager and willing to use its wings and move around from spot to spot in the loft.

The feather is probably the best guide to health, for if the young one has missed out on anything at all in its first three or four weeks of existence, the plumage will certainly show it.

The difference is such that the inferior one will stand out like a scarecrow in among the well-grown squeakers.

Size is no indication—many a good, sound youngster is below medium size.

On the other hand, many youngsters which are lacking in calcium are large and plump yet are wobbly on their legs, and invariably have bent keels.

Any young bird which is smaller than nature intended it to be will look "weedy" in every way including the feather.

There is nothing wrong with the small one if it is clean and sound, strong on its legs, and keen for its food.

The novice should note that all small birds are not weedy and that all big ones are not strong.

He will find that if he takes a mental picture of a youngster at four weeks of age, it is a replica in miniature of the bird when it has grown into maturity after the moult.

It may deteriorate a little when taken from its parents, and it may fall to pieces during the moult, but it will surely return to its former standard of perfection when it is ready to start work.

There can be many reasons for a bad breeding season, but in the main they can be sorted into two groups—background breeders and poor management. Care must be taken when selecting the pigeons to be used for the production of the next season's racers.

Apart from the quality of bloodline the first essential is that each bird selected is strong and healthy.

Age must be considered. An old cock is to be used give him a young vigorous hen. Be careful and wary of the hen which is getting old. A young cock cannot produce strong healthy squeakers if the hen is too old.

In most cases both parent birds are happy and content with their lot when settling down to rear a family, but on occasions it will be found that one of the partners (mostly the cock) is not a good feeder.

While his mate is busy doing all the hard work of feeding her youngsters, he is busy in other ways, such as chasing after other hens and making a proper nuisance of himself in general.

His progeny must prove of great value on the road if he is to be tolerated in the otherwise peace-loving community.

essential. This can be purchased ready-mixed or a suitable ration can be made.

A combination of shellgrit, ground oyster shell is better if it can be obtained, gravel grit, ordinary table salt, crushed red clay brick, a little sulphur and a light sprinkling of dry red oxide (enough to color the whole pink when dampened) makes a good mix.

If housed on concrete or wooden floors, a supply of earth dug from the garden will be relished by the parent birds when feeding the young.

Red Mite can play havoc in the nests in hot weather and will drive sitting birds from the eggs or young if they are not eliminated.

Once this pest gains a foothold in the loft it is extremely difficult to eradicate.

Infected nests can be treated with fly spray, but place a cup over the eggs or newly-hatched young to avoid contact with the spray.

If the novice is alert and watchful he will soon notice that Red Mite are in residence

Pigeon Notes By Vin Blanden

and he can save himself a lot of time and worry if he acts immediately.

Good winners can only come from sound, healthy squeakers — sometimes it is hard work to grow them, but it is worth it.

