

Forget About The Signs

There are few newcomers to pigeon racing who are not convinced that there are many secrets of selection which must first be learned before they can be successful in the sport.

They believe this because they have been told by some of the experts that there are ways and means of telling whether certain birds will be good producers or champion racers.

No doubt many first-year fanciers have already made their examinations and assessed the potential qualities of their pigeons.

In their research they have found that their flock was comprised of big birds, medium size, and small ones, pearl eyed, orange, brown and bull eyed birds, and pigeons of strong colors and others of weaker or 'washy' feather color.

Their investigations have shown them that they have a very mixed lot of birds in the loft, and in fact this is all that can be learned—the producing and racing qualities cannot be found until they are tried.

Many believe the racing pigeon is a remarkable bird because of its ability to find its way back home, but the pigeon is not a rarity.

We tend to magnify this inherited ability simply because we do not possess it ourselves.

If the young fancier studies this "homing instinct" a little he will find his cat and his dog have it; it can be found in many other animals and various creatures of the sea are not without it.

All migratory birds are equipped with this "inbuilt compass," and so are many insects including the bee.

At one time, the writer had two Black Ducks which would "home" in fast time from several miles back to their pond and it was not so long ago that a team of forty zebra finches were given daily exercise when they would trap back into their cage like a flock of homing pigeons.

ENDURANCE

Ordinary red browed finches (Waxbills) regularly flew flocks of two miles back to their cage in a flying time of five minutes.

The racing pigeon is not alone with its ability to orientate, but it must be admired

for its courage and determination, and above all for its great love for home which is responsible for its feats of physical endurance.

The novice will eventually find that some of his birds have a stronger love for home than others and this is the main difference between the good ones and the bad.

He will also learn that this admirable trait is found in families and can be retained in the offspring by selective breeding.

Despite what he may read, or be told, there are no certain discernible signs which disclose whether the bird has the trait or not.

Attempts to assess the qualities of a mixed bunch of pigeons are just so much waste of time. However, certain characteristics of the offspring of a proven pair of producers can be used to advantage later, but by this time the fancier is no longer a novice.

The newcomer is advised to forget all about the "signs" and devote his energies to the task of conditioning his pigeons for the races.

If he is observant, he will soon learn that while the signs of quality in the untried pigeon are elusive, the signs of physical fitness are evident to the eye.

These are the primary, and most important signs of which he must become conversant if he is to enjoy success.

The fit pigeon is a picture of stored energy and will stand out like a beacon among the unfit ones.

There are a few exceptions, but in the main the fit pigeon is seldom still in the loft, it is moving about almost constantly and its movements are effortless.

It can leave the floor of the loft and alight on the top perch with almost a single flap of its wings, and is as light on its feet as a ballet dancer.

Its feather is clean and often quivering at the extremity of the tail, and its eyes are clear and bright.

It is often a dainty eater which is never hungry and never does it huddle with outstretched wings over the feed bowl in an attempt to keep others away.

The novice will find that this is the most valuable sign to have in the loft and if he can maintain the majority of his

pigeons in this condition over the entire racing season he will be a participant in the prize lists and not just a contributor.

It is certain that some of his birds have "it," and many have not, but those which are the good ones will prove it along the road if they are physically able.

The successful owner is one who accepts the fact that his pigeons are bred with the ability to orientate, but doesn't waste his time trying to discover the reason.

He spends his time stocking his loft with those which possess the greatest love for home and getting them into the required condition.

He never becomes so smart that he can tell his pigeons how good they are, but prefers to allow them to tell him.

He may at one time look into his pigeon's eye through a magnifying glass and become most embarrassed to read what his pigeon thinks of him looking back through the other side.

No doubt he was soon convinced that this served no more useful purpose than trying to look down its throat to see if its toenails were clean.

The newcomer should realise that the best signs to know are the easy-to-read visible ones, and if he accepts this fact, he will make fewer mistakes and enjoy greater success.

TRAINING

The Railway training schedule begins on April 4 when birds may be trained on the North line from Mallaia, Bowmans, Redhill and Snowtown, Mondays to Saturdays inclusive.

The South line roster opens one week later, April 11, when birds can be rallied to Monarto, South and Tailem Bend, Tuesdays to Saturdays inclusive.

Peake will be included in the South line list on July 4, Tuesdays to Fridays inclusive.

Owners are requested to make sure their training baskets are in good order and safe to handle. Release doors should be fitted with leather straps or barge bolts to ensure fast and simple liberation. Release doors should not be tied with wire. 301-2220