

BREEDERS ART

At this time of the year many fanciers are looking at how to pair up their breeders to produce next season's racers, if not a "Champ". The old hands have their set methods and will go on as before in breeding although they do not realise it. The following notes are for the newcomers, these are the people who are always trying to find ways to improve, sadly, they do not always get the information which they seek. They hear about in-breeding, line breeding, out crossing and the hit and miss method of best to best, this is all very well for the fellow who can keep a hundred or so winners.

I would suggest to the newcomer that the following method should be seriously looked at, it should be said that this is in breeding. First a Super pigeon must be obtained, bred, bought or borrowed. By that I mean a pigeon that has won race after race. A cock is preferable but a hen will do. A pigeon of a pure strain is best, a "Mongrel" of ace performance may be used with care. The case for the cock will be given, but with a hen something similar can be arranged. Now obtain as many outstanding hens as you can up to say six. If they are all of different strains it may be better in the long run, but harder at first. The cock with these hens is then given a small loft with no other pigeons in it and a nest bowl for each hen. It will be better if all the hens are of the same colour but will work otherwise. Other pairs in an adjacent loft are mated a couple of days later and when the hens lay, the eggs are moved under them. The special team are allowed to sit 10 days on pot eggs. Then all eggs are removed and the birds allowed to nest again with several pairs again being mated a few days later. With three attempts and six hens there should, with luck, be 36 youngsters and only six weeks between them. The main team of 18 pairs or so can then be raced as they will only have reared a pair each. The 36 youngsters are trained and raced in the usual young bird program. Some will be lost but there should be at least six hens

by M. Bishop

left at the end of the season. If there are more the best six should be picked best going into the old bird race team and the others disposed of.

The six hens now repeat what their Dams did the previous season giving 36 more youngsters. After laying these eggs they should be still O.K. for racing and can be put into the racing team with six cocks that have been kept back. The sire can then be paired to any of the first year hens that have shown outstanding progeny if thought fit. At the end of the season there will be again six young hens and a yearling team of tried racers. It would probably be a good thing to take note of the outstanding yearling hens when selecting their daughters for the next year's mating, which is as before.

By this time the youngsters should be becoming a very even lot, but mixed among them will be several wasters. This is in-breeding, purifying the faults and they should be eliminated. The next step depends on how the original Sire was bred. If he was from a pure strain, the system can be carried on until he is too old to breed, but if a cross bred no matter how good there will be little improvement after the third mating. Each year there will be several cocks and hens not being used in this system. They will be the cocks that have just been raced and the hens from previous years. Some no doubt will be outstanding and from now on we can mate them together, the best to the best, brother to sister, half brother to half sister. We will breed a lot of wasters which we will throw out but also several outstanding birds that we will further inbreed to best to the best. With care we should soon have a family of quality equal to the original cock. If we continue inbreeding and selecting, the wasters will disappear and we shall have champi-

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ons only. However the best of these are not likely to be any better than the original champion so that is why he must be good. In the meanwhile we can keep the original cock on the system until he is finished breeding. If he is pure he is paired to his last year's daughters each year, but if not, the very best hens of the 3rd or 4th generation and kept to them. These methods were used by that leading breeder R. G. Silson of England.