

Training Your Racing Pigeons to Break

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What is breaking?

Breaking is when a bird separates from a flock and heads out on his own course. If you observe a flock of racing pigeons you will notice there is usually one leader once they are on a straight course. Occasionally there are a few that switch back and forth. The question is what are the other birds in the flock doing? They are following the leaders. When we talk about breaking then, we are also talking about leading.

Attempting to undo instincts

Pigeons by nature are gregarious. They want to be together for security. Young birds especially have a hard time breaking. It's in their instincts for survival. The predators usually seek out the loner as it might be sick or injured which in nature would be the reason the bird would be solo. Yet our goal is to have winners and leaders. When we train to produce leaders and birds that break we are attempting to train against instincts. This is important to remember.

How do you develop leaders and birds that break?

Breaking and leading are two different things. A leader is in front of the flock following his own course but with the security of the flock. The bird that breaks is on his own, but also following his own course. The common denominator is that both are following their own course. This is what we must train our racing pigeons to do. We must train them to follow their own course.

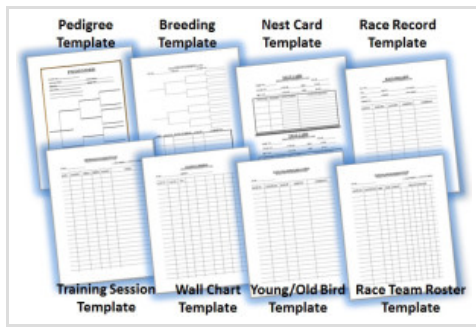
There are two methods in teaching the birds to follow their own course. The first is by single tossing. The bird has no choice but to follow his own instincts and choose the way home. Single tossing is time consuming depending on the size of your flock but is a very valuable training technique. For pigeon fanciers two of the most precious commodities are time and money.

The second method is to toss birds in small groups. I feel that tossing in small groups is better than single tossing. It takes less time and when birds are in small groups, they are still racing each other and battling to be leader. Start out by breaking your flock into 3 groups. For that toss there should have been at least three leaders, often more, as the birds battle for the lead position. Later, you can break them down into smaller groups of less than ten and eventually down to groups of three. In small group tossing you are developing leaders, which is developing the same instinct that will produce birds that will break and follow their own course.

When tossing small groups or individual pigeons it is important to make sure they do not get together into one large group. Often a flock may appear to go out of site and eventually fly back over the release point 10-15 minutes later. One way to try to prevent this is to let the birds go at not only different time intervals but also at different distances. Choose the distance that you want to train from. Find a very close road that runs perpendicular to the distance. Let one group go. After they are out of sight, drive 1-5 miles and let another group go. Repeat until all the groups have been released. This may prevent them from grouping up into one larger group.

Some experiences from small group tossing.

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Often when we have a training toss we gauge the success or failure of the toss on how the pigeons arrive home. We are not able to see what the birds do between the release point and the arrival home. The only factor we can see and measure is when they arrive home and in what condition they arrive. When we release the birds as one large group, we have only one measure of how the birds trained.

When I started tossing in smaller groups, I made some interesting observations. I would often toss my birds in 3 groups of approximately 12-20 pigeons each. I would record what time I released each group, how long it took for them to leave out of sight and what heading they were last seen at. When my racing pigeons arrived home, they had Tauris bands on and were also clocked by the computer if they arrived home before me.

Some times, two groups would come home together yet another group would come home in singles and doubles. Other times the last group released would be the first group home and the first group released would be the last to arrive. One group would make excellent time and another would take twice as long to get home.

How do you end up with such different results when all groups were released from the same point? As stated before, we are only observers of the release and the arrival but not the dynamics of what happen between those points. My conclusions then are only theories as they can not be proven until one can observe the dynamics of the actual training flight. Here are my ideas on why we have such strange results.

You can often observe at the release point that the birds will start to head out one direction with one leader and then a different bird gets in the front and they take a new heading. Or sometimes, one bird starts to break and the flock turns to "pick them up" staying true to their gregarious nature. There is a battle for the lead position and the direction of travel for the entire group then depends on who is holding that lead position. I think this explains the return of singles and doubles. I believe that if the lead bird takes the flock on the wrong heading, slowly, the other birds realize this, break off and head home on their own. This would explain why there would be such a broken return.

In the case of one group doing poorly and the other groups having a good toss could be explained by the same event. The leader of the poorly performing group took them on longer flight but not enough for the entire group to break or eventually a different bird took lead and brought the team home on the right course.

In any flock there are excellent birds and poor birds. There will always be a battle for the lead position. Until the poor leaders are lost from training, there is always the chance of a poor return. So this is the secondary goal of our training. To train until we have enough confident leaders and any birds that are true followers or dummies are gone from the team.

Training Your Racing Pigeons to Break by Domanski Family Lofts