

# Marree Open Winner

Pat and Ruth Hughes' pigeon won the Marree Open race competing against 3,700 birds.

His family has been involved with pigeons long before he could walk - his grandfather and his two sons - one of them being Larry Hughes are involved in pigeons.

Pat and Ruth actually had first and second in the Marree Open race. The first bird to the loft, a hen which was clocked second, was bred by Craig Nisbet. The bloodlines are the best of Bob Marchant, which was the best the Nisbet Brothers could buy.

The second bird which ended up being First Assoc is Hyskin Van Reil - Van Loon Jansen x Pryor-Kakoschke which was bred by Cliff Nagle. The two birds came home together and within ten minutes of them homing they were cuddling up in the loft, so Pat says he thinks they can stay together now.

Feeding used to be a pre-mixed feed but now Pat feeds 50% peas 50% wheat, then buys a parrot mix from the super market which he mixes with the peas and wheat.

Pat does not keep any prisoner stock birds - they all fly out. He breeds off sixteen pairs, mostly race birds, though he has four stock cocks and six stock hens which he previously had put in stock.

The origins of Pat's birds are Eitzens, Van Loons and Jansens. He says his birds may not be the best in the world but they are the best he could get at the time and he is currently trying to build up his Eitzen family.

He breeds 80 to 100 youngsters and would probably lose ten around the loft before training starts.

Pat worms his birds twice a year, on the first day of training and the first day he pairs up his stock birds. Pat uses a dog worming tablet for this. This is the only medication his birds get.

He thinks retired people have an advantage over people who work full time when it comes to racing pigeons.

Oodnadatta was a memorable race for Pat as he should have won the Assoc. but, being the drunk he was at the time, his wife had to clock the pigeon.

Training for the late bred birds doesn't start until two weeks before the start of Association races because they are so far behind the other birds if they get pushed too hard they will eventually get lost..

Pat tried widowhood for three years but it was the worst thing he tried because of our winter weather, it's too cold and it's not the place to race widowhood.

There is no preference to racing cock or hen birds and he can't understand why people tell him "it's a cock bird I don't want that." He just won a race with a cock bird, without cock birds you haven't got good pigeons.