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PRESENTS

Pigeon Racing Fundamentals
Volume. 1

The Loft
Loft Management

Learn proper loft management techniques for strong, healthy, happy birds.

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The Loft

The loft is an important part in determining your success, not only is it the place where your birds call home but it is also in many circumstances the finish line in a race. The loft should be built strong, effective in keeping out predators and the elements, and also be peaceful and relaxing. It is also essential that the loft be properly designed, constructed and managed. After all the loft has a big influence on the other essential elements of a successful race team like feeding, health, breeding, conditioning most everything is done in or around the loft.

Your loft does not have to be big an extravagant to be effective how much you spend on constructing you loft has no effect on your success. As long as the loft keeps your birds safe, clean, dry, calm, nourished and well rested it has done its job and your pigeons will be happy. Like we said before happy pigeons equal successful flyers.

You should also try to make your loft as appealing as possible so it fits well within your community and surrounding area. Many people know very little or in most cases know nothing at all about pigeon racing so the “curb appeal” of your loft will go along way with both keeping the image of pigeon racing in good standings with your community and even helping to promoting the sport. Your loft may inspire others in your community to be interested in pigeon racing so keep your loft presentable at all times both inside and out.

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Loft Construction

You should properly plan and brainstorm before the construction of your loft begins, proper planning will save you time and money and will help reduce problems and pitfalls later on. Here are some things you should think about prior to building your loft,

Expense

You can easily spend a ton of money building a loft; the key though is building your loft according to your budget. Nothing takes the fun and excitement out of pigeon racing like spending a ton of money before even getting your first bird. Spending more than you could afford is an easy way to get yourself frustrated. You can easily build an attractive functional loft for little money, so plan your expenses prior to building.

Location

The location of your loft is usually determined by the space you have, hopefully you have enough space to provide you with some options when determining the location of the loft. You should try to face the major openings of the loft away from the general direction of bad weather, also try to place your loft in open areas away from buildings, trees and power lines that may tempt your birds to land on. Your loft should be built in a quiet, relaxing and sunny spot; this will help with the temperament of your birds. Sunlight is a very important part to positioning your loft, a good example would be to observe pigeons during sunny days, they are more alert, awake and active and even seem to be happier, now let's look at birds during cloudy, overcast days they are quite, sluggish and even look to be depressed. Sunlight not only helps with the temperament of your birds it also provides vitamin D and helps with their metabolism and immune system. When determining the position of your loft, face your loft where it can get the most sunlight during the day.

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Authority

Be sure to check with your local authority to find out about any local zoning and building laws and codes, be sure to check your area and acquire any permits that you may need to have before building. Also check with the Department of health as they may have some rules and regulations that may apply to your loft as well.

Size

The size of your loft is usually determined by the three factors listed above; expense, location and authority as well as how many birds you want to keep. A good rule of thumb is, you should allow about 8 to 10 cubic feet of airspace per bird.

Types of Lofts

The possibilities are endless when it comes to building pigeon lofts but there are four main categories that a loft can fit into; proper planning prior to building will give you a good idea of what loft type will best fit your lifestyle.

Converts

Converts are basically any structure that has been converted into a loft. Converts are very popular with beginners as well as fanciers with very limited space and funds, because of there in-expense and ease. Some of the most common converts are attics, garages, sheds, prefab sheds from your local home improvement store and even children's playhouses have be used for lofts. You can easily convert these structures into comfortable lofts by adding a few walls and some inner fixtures like nest boxes and perches.

Pre-Fab lofts

Pre-fab pigeon lofts are becoming more readily available these days. The good thing about them is they can be custom made for you and they are usually designed very well. However pre-fab lofts can be very expensive and difficult to have shipped.

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Common Loft

The common loft is most always built by the fancier themselves; they are totally customizable because the fancier builds them from the ground up to his/her specs. Popular sizes of these lofts are usually 6 to 8 ft wide, 10 or 12 feet long and from 6-8 feet high.

Large Lofts

These lofts are usually adopted by experienced or wealthy fanciers. They are built in many sizes and with many types of media like wood, brick etc. These large structures commonly consist of 2 levels or floors and can house many birds. These structures are usually expensive and because of there size may need building permits prior to being built.

Elements of a Loft.

Lofts are actually very simple structures and only need to consist of a few main elements to be effective like a floor, walls, roof, aviaries and some internal and external fixtures. Pigeons are very resilient animals and are quiet content living in any structure as long as it keeps them safe, clean, dry, calm and out of the elements. The lofts design is actually not so much for the pigeon but more for the fancier. The design of the loft helps the fancier organize and manage the loft more efficiently without adding stress to the bird's lives. The design of the loft also helps with training and race day procedures, helping them be more effective and to help shave precious seconds off the clock. Let's discuss some of the essential elements of a well designed loft and see how they help the pigeons and aid the fancier.

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Main Elements

Floor, Walls and Roof
The floor wall and roof are pretty much just like any other structure, but there are a few things that should be adapted for use in a pigeon loft.

Floor

The floor should be built 1 to 2 feet off the ground this helps air flow underneath the loft to help keep it dry and ventilated; it also helps to keep rodents and other animals out of the loft and living under it.

Walls

The walls are pretty standard but they should be tall enough so that you are able to stand erect in the loft. Your going to be doing a lot of things in the loft so being able to stand in it will help save your back and make it more comfortable for you to work in.

Roof

The Roof can either be peaked or sloping, the most common type of roof on pigeon lofts is the sloping roof. It should slop from the front to back or from most used areas to less used areas to allow for water runoff. The roof should extend over the walls 12 to 18 inches on all sides. This way water doesn't collect on the landing board or in the loft itself. Also many

fanciers attach picket fences to the roof; this deters the birds from not landing on the roof when flying, which is extremely costly during a race.

External Elements

Aviary

Aviaries are wire enclosures attached to the loft; they allow the pigeons to bask in the sun and to get some fresh air without letting them out. Aviaries are an essential element to any loft.

Landing Board

The landing board is a large flat surface placed in front of the trap that the pigeons land on before entering the trap and loft.

Trap

A trap is a device that allows the pigeons to enter the loft but does not let them exit. Traps are used during training and conditioning and especially during racing. After the bird is let out to fly or is liberated at the beginning of a race the bird flies back to the loft enters the trap, which allows the handler to catch the bird and clock it or just not have to worry about it getting back out. There are a few different trap types including the open door trap, bob trap, stall trap and sputnik trap.

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Ventilation

One very important ingredient to having a successful loft is proper loft ventilation. The goal to ventilating the loft is to get the air inside of the loft to be as fresh as the air outside. Proper loft ventilation helps your loft stay dry and your birds stay relaxed, ventilation in the loft also aids with the health of your birds. Good ventilation in the loft will create a cleaner, fresher, dryer and more relaxed atmosphere for your birds.

Internal Elements

Perches

Perches are simply elevated places where the pigeons can land and stand on. Perches can be very simply constructed from excess building supplies used for your loft even something as simple as a block of wood fixed to the wall of the loft makes a great perch for the birds. There should be more perches in the loft then there are birds. As long as the birds can land on it and be comfortable, it can be used as a perch.

Nestbox

A nestbox is a compartment in the loft where a cock and hen build nests and care for their young. Nestboxes are usually clustered together sort of like a pigeon apartment building. The nestbox is the pigeon's apartment within the loft.

Corridor

Corridors in a loft are not necessary and are usually seen in medium to larger size lofts but do help in managing the loft. A corridor is a hallway that runs the length of the loft, so when entering the loft you do not enter directly into the pigeons sections and disturb the birds. Corridors also allow you to walk and observe your pigeons without being inside of their pens. Using a corridor in the loft helps lower stress levels to the birds and helps to manage the loft effectively.

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General Loft Management

Proper loft management does not have to be complex. The most important aspects to good loft management are organization, cleanliness and record keeping.

Organization

Having a well organized loft will allow you to manage your loft more effectively and efficiently, it will also help to decrease frustration. Your lofts layout should be designed to maximize organization. Designate certain areas for supplies, food or medications.

Cleanliness

Cleanliness should be a top priority in the loft, having an unclean loft brings forth a whole list of problems, including disease and unfit birds. The best way to fight against disease is with prevention. So be sure to keep your loft tidy, clean and well ventilated.

Record Keeping

Keeping good records will help to keep you organized and successful. You should keep records of feeding schedules, health care regimens, training sessions, race results, breeding and pairing patterns and anything else that will help you and your loft be more successful. Good records will show you what you need to work on and will assist in fine tuning your team.

Conclusion

The Loft is one of the key elements to being successful in this sport. The loft is in most cases the finish line to the race, it is the research and development lab where you can fine tune your race team, it is where your birds are born, bred and grow but most importantly it is there home. So remember to do your research before building your loft, stay within your budget, and keep cleanliness and the well being of your bird's top priority.

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