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PRESENTS

Pigeon Racing Fundamentals *Volume. 2*

Stock Selection

Choosing Foundation Birds

The foundation of a winning team.

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Introduction

In every successful loft one of the main components is starting off with good foundation stock. What is foundation stock? Foundation stock is the breeders in your loft that are the basis or foundation of your entire loft. The key to finding foundation birds is not to just find birds that breed, but to find birds that will breed potential winners. Your foundation birds will determine how successful and competitive your loft can be. There are other factors to being successful in this sport like nutrition, loft management, training etc but starting with good quality birds is a must.

Many new pigeon fanciers hope for immediate success, which is very difficult considering the high cost of building a loft, buying equipment and securing good breeders. Many times new fanciers build expensive lofts and great equipment and get mediocre birds to save money. There are tons of avenues available these days to find good foundation birds, and it has become even easier in the past ten years with the use of the internet.

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Where to Get Foundation Birds

Some ideas for getting good foundation birds are the internet, late hatches, direct stock purchase, disposal sales, magazine advertisements, imports and old bird retirees just to name a few. As you can see there are many places to secure both good breeders and birds that will breed potential winners. Your foundation stock is the basis of your racing team; if you want strong competitive teams you must get strong competitive birds want a weak team? Then secure lesser quality birds, it's that simple. Let's look at each one a little closer.

Pot Luck

The "Pot Luck" method of getting birds is a method that many pigeon fanciers today started with; it is also the same reason why some quit the sport all together. The pot luck method refers to the flyer receiving a bunch of birds given for many different reasons and having to sort through them to find the best ones. Unfortunately it is very difficult for new flyers to find the best birds in the bunch and virtually becomes a coin flip, the pot luck method of acquiring birds is definitely not recommended. The good thing about the "Pot Luck" method is the fact that it will give the new flyer some experience for caring for their birds, but since were interested in winning races there are much better ways of getting good foundation birds.

Late Hatches

Late hatches are a great way to get good birds from top flyers. A late hatch is a bird that hatches after the racing season. Before purchasing late hatches from breeders do your research by going over the race records and results of the loft you are looking to purchase them from. If the loft fits your race criteria then approach the breeder and ask him if he is willing to sell some late hatches off of his good flyers. You should be able to buy these birds at a reasonable price.

Old Bird Retirees

Getting old bird retirees is another great way of acquiring good foundation birds. When birds get two old and loose their racing ability many top breeders will sell them, however it doesn't happen often and it may be pricey. The great thing about these birds especially the good ones is that many will have a great resume and bloodlines, and are good breeders of potential winners. You may have to shop around being that the selections are limited but the end result will be worth it.

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Direct Stock Purchase

Purchasing direct stock is probably the best and most costly way of securing top quality foundation stock for your loft. Direct stock purchase is when you contact top lofts and purchase some of their best birds. The very best birds in the loft are almost never for sale and if they are you will pay a fortune for them, you are better off buying the brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles etc of the best birds. Many times these birds are race tested and proven to breed winners.

Disposal sales

Disposal sales are sort of like going out of business sales meaning that if a loft decides to leave the sport for any number of reasons they will sell off their stock. The things to look out for when buying from disposal sales is to be among the first to get there, Most of the time the best birds are taken first, which leaves the late comers with a small selection and quality. If it is a very good loft almost all the birds in the loft will be good ones, but these lofts rarely have disposal sales only for real morbid reasons like a death.

Advertisements

As the sport of pigeon racing grows you will begin to see more and more advertisements from lofts selling their birds either on the internet or in magazines. This gives yet another option for pigeon fanciers to purchase birds, however the best way to go about

purchasing birds from advertisers is to do your homework. Ask others who have already dealt with the loft in question and see what their feedback is. Contact the loft by phone or email and ask them questions, look at race results and pedigrees. The advertisements are only as honest as the sellers so do your research before buying birds this way.

Auctions

Auctions are very popular because you can get great stock low prices, birds are put up for auction for many reasons sometimes after races if they are not bought back they are auctioned off which is good because the birds are already race tested, lofts often put their birds up for auction as a means to build revenue for their loft. Also if you go to a live auction you will be able to handle the birds which is great because you can look for characteristics of good birds. Like with anything else do your homework before purchasing.

Shows

Pigeon shows are not only a good place to get birds but they are a great place to be if you're a pigeon fancier. They are a great place to go to see new products, meet other fanciers, find birds for sale, ask questions and so on. Just like live auctions buying birds at shows are great because you can actually handle the birds. Another perk about getting birds at shows is that most of the time the loft managers will be present, so you can ask them questions about the birds and get to know them more, often times they will even answer questions like how should you pair the birds and so on and so forth.

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The Internet

The internet is probably the number one place these days to get great foundation birds for your loft. The internet has made things possible today that were nearly impossible years ago. It has made it possible for the pigeon fancier to buy birds from top lofts from all around the world, there are many online pigeon auctions, you can visit top loft websites and buy birds directly from them. Basically everything mentioned above can be done online. The internet has not only helped the beginning pigeon fancier in many ways it has also helped the sport to grow. Again just like anything else research is a must because you can not physically see the birds, good research done now can save you lots of frustration later on.

What to Look For.

When looking for good foundation birds for your loft there are a few things to look for that can help you select the very best birds. However getting good at this will take experience but knowing what to look for can give you a head start.

The first thing you will want to look for is which type of racing you will be doing, are you looking for fast sprinters that race short distances, or are you looking for long distance flyers. There is no sense of getting sprinters when the majority of your races are going to be long distance and vice versa.

- Short distances are usually up to 200 miles
- Middle distance are usually from 200 to 400 miles
- And long distance are 400 to 700+ miles

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The Eye

The eye should be nicely placed in the head and look healthy and sparkling. The eye cere should be average texture and size not being over emphasized or lacking and should be either dark or cream colored.

General Condition

The bird should be clean and healthy looking and it should fit right into the hand not being to light or heavy and should have a good balance to it. When in the hand the tail should slightly slope downward and the body feathers should be lying smoothly. All in all the bird should look and feel fit and healthy.

Keel & Pectoral Muscles

Now you can feel for the keel and pectoral muscles the keel is an extension of the sternum and gives the birds pectoral muscles an anchor to attach to. The pectoral muscles are found on wither side of the keel, these are the muscles the drive the wings. A pigeon with a deep V feeling usually means lack of muscle mass.

The Neck

The neck should be fairly thick and short, tapering off into a nice curve into the under part of the body and back. Color should also be showing in its neck feathers.

The Tail

The tail feathers should developed in proportion to the pigeon's general feather condition and size of its body. The tail feathers should be well arranged, the tail feather should be one feather width with the other eleven stacked one on top of the other. The tail should also be thick and well padded.

Vent Bones

The vent bones should be fairly close in males and slightly apart in females, they should have a smooth round feeling to them and posses plenty of rigidity.

Conclusion

Your foundation stock is a very important decision it is the foundation of your entire loft and how successful your loft can be. But remember these are only guidelines and in no way are they set in stone, just because a racing pigeon is pretty doesn't mean it will be a winning racer. Health and conditioning still play a huge role in the success of your loft but health and condition cannot be used synonymously remember,

"Condition is not possible without health but health is, possible without racing conditioning" –Leslie C. Swanson

This means, a well trained bird needs to be healthy but a healthy bird does not need to be well trained. Just because they look healthy doesn't mean they'll win races. The main lesson is to do your research, take your time and get the very best birds your budget can handle; it can save you lots of frustration and time later on.

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