

# Manual for the show of The Racing Pigeon



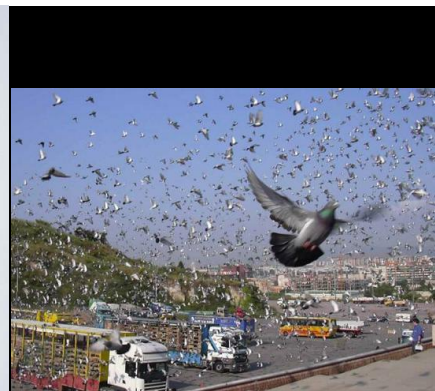
**Racing Pigeon**



**Pied Racing Pigeon**



**Racing Pigeon in flight**



**Let them Loose for the race**

## **Racing Pigeon**

**Manual for Judging.**

**Attie van Aswegen**

# Racing Pigeon

## Requirements for Juniors and Seniors during National Youth Show Championships

1. Need to understand the content of the Racing Pigeon manual and successfully complete and pass a theoretical test based on the content.
2. Must be able to do a practical test during the Championships and successfully demonstrate complete knowledge.
3. Must be able to handle his/her pigeon properly, place it neatly in a Show pen and catch and take it out of the show pen.
4. Must know the main requirement of his/her breed's show standard and show the judge the breed requirements through handling or can demonstrate with a judge's stick and explain.
5. Must be able to point out and describe some shortcomings/faults of his/her pigeon according to the pigeon breed standard to the judge.
6. Must be able to give reasons why he/she keeps a specific breed/s.

### Cleaning Requirements

- 2 x Cloths - One to wash the beak and feet and one to apply wound - oil or own special mixture.
- 1 x Cleaning agent or Water
- 1 x Wound – oil or own Mixture
- 1 x Nail clippers - to cut the beak and toe nails if necessary.
- 1 x Nail file - For filing the beak and toe nails.
- 1 x Nail brush - to brush the feet and toe nails if necessary.
- 1 x Tweezer - to pick out excess feathers between toes or to pick the leg clean of feathers if necessary.
- 1 x Water basin - to wash the beak and feet.
- 1 x Soap and 1 x Towel - For washing hands before working with pigeons and again after working with oils so that the pigeons feathers do not smear.
- 1 x Case - to neatly hold together all the above. (Optional)

# Racing Pigeon

## External features of the perfect Racing Pigeon

Although we must have a certain measure, criteria or standard to which we classify or rate a pigeon, called a global method, we cannot condemn any pigeon only on external appearances. There is one fact that should always be remembered and it is not to stare blindly at a property because it is the mistake already made by many, and even many who call themselves experts are still making the same mistake. The pigeon must always be reviewed and assessed as whole.

The method described here are equally applicable to the assessment of Racing Pigeons on shows than otherwise. A person, who is unable to express good and sound judgment about pigeons, can forget to ever breed a good Racing Pigeon because then the sport, hobby or pigeon breeding is not a challenge anymore and the person's interest will gradually die.

When there is a study of judging made of livestock, especially the American methods and more particularly Professor Jan Bonsma, we must agree that the major requirement is productivity. In this case it is of course the ability to produce good fliers, as is the case in beef cattle to produce more meat, the dairy cattle more milk and to get a calf every year from those cows. This is the maximum production per year.

With the pigeon of course, we can breed as many babies a year as we want, but to breed good babies from each pair in the loft is an entirely different story. With external characteristics we mean those that can be seen or felt, and the following is taken into account when assessing:

### 1. General appearance: Saag van Wyngaard

There are those who will say that it has nothing to do with the whole matter, because it's not always good looking pigeon that will breed good babies. But it is nevertheless the case that the general appearance actually, if points would be awarded, would get more points than any of the others. What is meant by general appearance? It points to a very large extent of our breeding, character and quality.

When pigeons sit in the show pen or even in their own lofts, there are many who will impress us. Even the nature of the pigeon is to be considered. A lively pigeon with a clear eye and outlook will always take precedence over a wild pigeon with the same good qualities. It can be seen on the head. The pigeon can almost be summed up without taking it in hand. But to pay attention to the other points we catch the pigeon and then look at the other priorities.

### 2. Head: Saag van Wyngaard

The type of head determines whether it is a good representative of the breed. A Charming head with good depth and width and the necessary sophistication, i.e., a force refined head is the ideal. The male must show a male and the female a female head. The wattle should preferably not be too large, but bright white in colour and if there is pressed on the wattle no moisture must be seen. The eye care must be open and medium-sized.

### 3. Eye: Saag van Wyngaard

This is one of the most important characteristics of a pigeon, whether we want to admit it or not a good pigeon always has a good eye. That is to say the expression in the eye itself, the size and position of the eye as well as the viewer, the richness of colour in it, there must have been worked lavishly with the colour, whether light or deep in colour, the more dots and dashes in them, the better. This is no reference to the so-called "Eye signs", we would not discuss it here at all, because there are too many opinions, it is only speculation and is very complicated, but we will only keep to the eye itself. Vitality is essential and this can be seen in the eye. The eye should be bright and must perform well to light, the pupil must respond well to light, or in direct sunlight, and that is, the pupil must be able to maximally stretch and again shrink to almost a pinhead size. Like the feathers the eye also reflects the inner health of the pigeon. Just look how quickly the eye fades if a pigeon is sick for example, coccidiosis and paratyphus.



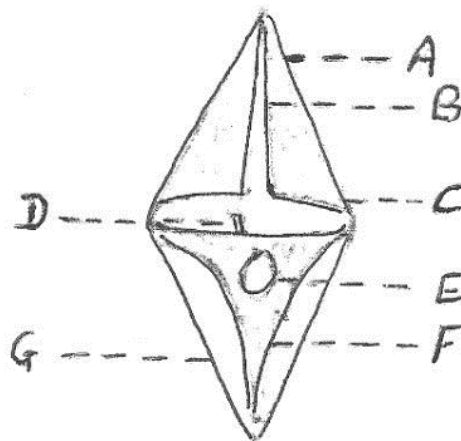
Hold the head like this if you want to look at the eye.

#### 4. Throat: Saag van Wyngaard

It should be second nature to have a look inside a pigeon's throat when he/she is taken in the hand. Great value must be given to the state of the throat. If we look inside the throat, we see the following:



Take the lower jaw, push up the top jaw, press back the head and the throat can be viewed within.



- A - Upper jaw**
- B - Gap soft palate**
- C - Hazel**
- D - Vascular**
- E - Windpipe opening**
- F - Tong**
- G - Lower jaw**

Firstly, the teeth of the almond or curtain should be intact. If the teeth are missing, the pigeon must have had cancer at some stage. Secondly, the windpipe opening that is located in the tongue should with each breathing change from round to elongate. A big round gaping hole is a very bad sign and is rarely found in a good pigeon. However, there are exceptions and this is also true, pigeons who are too fat, which is about to lay an egg, which is scared or nervous or unfit, can display a gaping windpipe and it is of course of no importance. Thirdly, a throat too red or too pale, points to in bad condition. A rose-like or pale pink colour indicates a healthy state. Furthermore, the throat should always be dry. Moist (wetness), slimy white foam, white or yellow buttons show a state of disease. Furthermore, the tongue should lie systematically and flat in the bottom jaw and the opening should be narrow and elongated. Finally, the blood vein must be clearly visible in the back of the palate, just below the teeth of the curtain.

### **5. Feathers and Muscles: Saag van Wyngaard**

This brings us to the feathers, which must always be soft and silky. Soft feathers is always the cover of soft, supple muscles, so the correlation of soft feathers must always be remembered with quality muscles, there is always talk of weightless smooth muscles which of course is the ideal. When someone takes a pigeon in his hands and the feathers has a way to talk to him/her, then that person has already made good progress with his knowledge of the racing pigeon. The feathers are the most important feature, if anything is wrong with the pigeon's health, you will immediately see it, and vice versa, if the feathers are smooth and silky, and shining in the sun we can assume that the pigeon is in good health. Furthermore, the shaft of the feathers where it comes from the body must not split ("Split Quill"). If the feathers composition is analysed, we know it mainly consists of sulphur and phosphorus. It is therefore desirable that small amounts of ordinary flowers of sulphur or crushed shells be added to feed, especially during moulting (shed). Equally important and even more than all the other parts of the body are the muscles. As we have already mentioned, with the feathers, the muscles must be supple, soft and elastic. If it is touched with the fingertips, the muscle must give away or the fingers must be able to sink in the flesh. It should not be as hard as a board feel. We must remember that we are dealing, one could say with athletes and body builders. Furthermore, there is a vibration attend or so-called electric current, indicating that the muscle is alive or set in action. The muscles should not feel mushy, but weightless. It can be readily accepted because the heavier the muscles, the more weight the pigeon must keep in flight. Therefore it must be warned not to exaggerate the muscles and later with a mass of meat barely able to stay in the air. Rather give preference to a pigeon with thinner muscles than to the one that has heavy muscles.

### **6. Back: Saag van Wyngaard**

The back of the pigeon is one of the points which must be looked at very carefully. This is where in a good pigeon one of the strengths is recognized. A strong back is not one that is measured by the amount of pressure that can be exerted on it, although it must be strong with the rest of the bones. There can lightly, with the thumb, pressure be applied without injuring the pigeon. The back should be straight and the hump back or turtle back and the crocodile back should be discriminated against. The back not only consist of the backbone, but the ribs that are attached to it as well, so that it forms a unit. Then, when looking at the back, press with the thumbs the wings away from the body. It should be wide between the shoulders and go in a wedge shape towards the tail, and concludes with a narrow tip to the tail. At the top it should run straight, and should not have a hollow place at the tail. When the pigeon are held with the thumb on the back and the middle finger on the breastbone, the thumb should smoothly slide from between the shoulders to the tail without getting stuck.

### **7. Breast and Vent bones: Saag van Wyngaard**

The chest should end fairly deep, long, straight and the rear point should be as close as possible, no more than a finger width in males and slightly wider in females and in line with the vent bones. The chest should be full, well-muscled, rounded and stretched far forward. The vent bones must be strong, straight and long.

### 8. Wing: Saag van Wyngaard

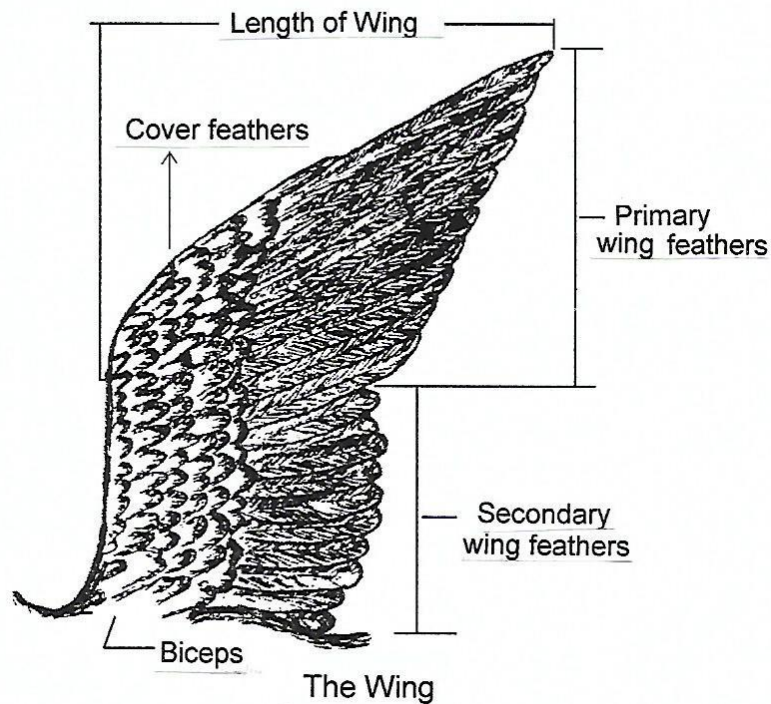
The wing is very interesting compiled and consists of a series of levers, namely the arm, fore-arm and the hand. The ideal of every pigeon fancier is to shorten the arm and the fore-arm and extend the hand as much as possible. The shorter the arm, the easier it is for the pigeon to move its wings. The arm and fore-arm are in direct relation to each other, because in general, the shorter the fore-arm, the shorter the arm. The fore-arm also has the part behind the wing where the secondary feathers are situated. Look at that part when the wing is wide open, it should be as narrow as possible, in other words, the secondary pins should be short so that the pigeon can use it to float, but also to clap along quickly, otherwise it falls to the ground. These are the parts of the wing which is a sign of a good racing pigeon. Since we are working on writing a book, the pupil of the day should focus on the reasons why certain parts are located in a certain place of the wing. But what must be stated is that the primary flight feathers should be as narrow as possible and that there should be a definite reasonable opening at the ends of the last three feathers. Furthermore, it displays it clear as the wing is opened the right way.



The correct method to open the wing. Note that the wing is touched at the last few flight feathers and are opened. The wing will then open in a natural position and not be forced into a required position. Open it so far so it is kept in a flight position. The wing feathers on the body should be well cover so that there is no gap between the body and the wing.

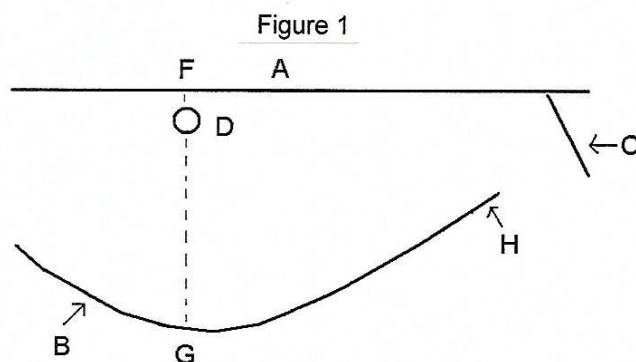


The wrong way to open a pigeon's wing.



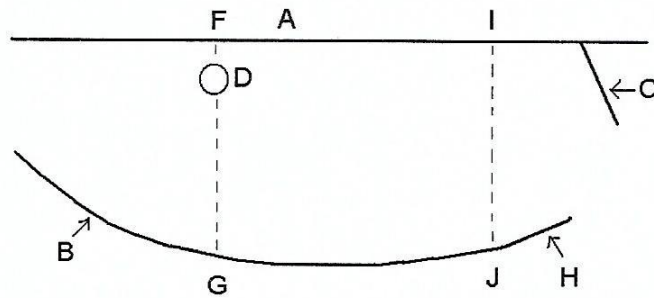
### 9. Balance: Saag van Wyngaard

It plays a bigger role than is thought. This is the main principle that air travel is based on. Compare kites, airplanes and gliders. There must be a perfect balance, otherwise they will come down. The flat body or cylinder shaped pigeons are rarely worth anything. This flat pigeons have not got enough bone structure for the muscles to be attached onto. In other words, the muscles are too closely anchored to the moving points. Longer muscles are also preferred because they can move better than the shorter muscles. The keel of the pigeon must never be too deep. When this is the case, other undesirable factors emerge.



A: - The back. B: - Breast Bone. C: - Tail-bone. D: - Wing Connection. F-G: - Depth. This is the ideal physique. The tip of the breastbone (H) goes into the tail-bones and not over the top. There should be a gap between these points, but not too large, otherwise the breastbone will be short and leave little room for muscle joint-mint.

Figure 2



A - G as shown in Fig. 1. I-J: - The depth of the cross at the top of the breastbone (H) is too big and gives the pigeon a cylinder shape. It makes him hard in the abdomen so that the pigeon is out of balance.

### 10. Housing:

Housing is finally to be the pigeon fancier's choice, but directionally it must be a well ventilated cage and overcrowding should be avoided due to health reasons. - Housing is discussed in detail in the notes at a later stage.



The correct method to hold a pigeon.



The tail should be one and a half feathers wide.

## Standard of Racing Pigeon for show – included in the South African Fancy Pigeon Association book of standards

### 1. Type:

Type determines whether it is a good representative of the breed. This is the outer alignment of the pigeon, in other words, it is largely determined by the body, head, wings, tail and plumage. Type is also determined to some extent by the skeleton and muscle development. Type the qualities represented by evaluation of pigeons, the pigeons race and is of the utmost importance.

The ideal racing pigeon is a pigeon of moderate to good size. A pigeon with good depth and width of the body, an elegant and alert attitude, strong wings and shoulders with sturdy, well-placed legs. The body parts must be Proportionate and in harmony with each other. In other words, a good racing pigeon is a pigeon with a compact wedge-shaped body, strong shoulders and neck of medium length that good links up with the body. Any pigeon with a slim, slender body, long legs and a long neck, should be regarded as a weak type.



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When pigeons sit in the show pen or even in their own lofts, there are many who will impress us. Even the nature of the pigeon is to be considered. A lively pigeon with a clear eye and outlook will always take precedence over a wild pigeon with the same good qualities. It can be seen on the head. The pigeon can almost be summed up without taking it in hand. But to pay attention to the other points we catch the pigeon and then look at the other priorities.

### 2. Head:

A Charming head with good depth, with the necessary sophistication, i.e., a prince refined head, is considered ideal. The male must show a male and the female a female head. The beak should be of medium length. The beak should be strong, fairly thick at the base, adjust slightly curved and well in the head. Each pigeon with sunken eyes, a long face crow type head and a marked straight or curved beak, should be regarded as undesirable type head. The wattles and thimbles must be of medium size and bright white in colour. The thimbles should ideally go and be open around the eye. The throat must be clean, dry and bright rosy red colour and free of any yellow spots, cheesy material and mucus.

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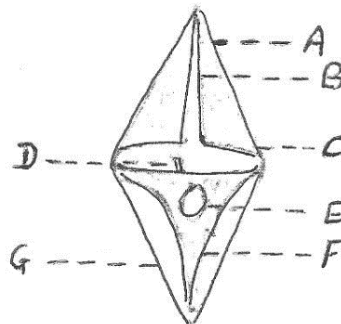
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- B - Gap soft palate**
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Firstly, the teeth of the almond or curtain should be intact. If the teeth are missing, the pigeon must have had cancer at some stage. Secondly, the windpipe opening that is located in the tongue should with each breathing change from round to elongate. A big round gaping hole is a very bad sign and is rarely found in a good pigeon. However, there are exceptions and this is also true, pigeons who are too fat, which is about to lay an egg, which is scared or nervous or unfit, can display a gaping windpipe and it is of course of no importance. Thirdly, a throat too red or too pale, points to in bad condition. A rose-like or pale pink colour indicates a healthy state. Furthermore, the throat should always be dry. Moist (wetness), slimy white foam, white or yellow buttons show a state of disease. Furthermore, the tongue should lie systematically and flat in the bottom jaw and the opening should be narrow and elongated. Finally, the blood vein must be clearly visible in the back of the palate, just below the teeth of the curtain.

#### **4. Neck:**

The neck should be of medium length, neatly rounded (well groomed), slightly curved and covered with smooth, soft, glossy feathers, colourful, glossy feathers of the neck, is an indication of good quality feathers. The neck should be evenly broader course to where it links up with the body.

#### **5. Feathers:**

The adage "The feathers make the bird" is in pigeon's special application. The colour and quality of the feathers are important in the selection of good show pigeon and kite. The feathers of pigeons should be bright and rich coloured waxy appearance. The feathers should be fine and soft, well-formed and glossy. Dull-coloured, hard, ragged, dry and feathers holes (Pin hole) was a mistake. A beautiful pigeon with glossy soft feathers, with a good coverage flour dust, however, is the ideal, but too much flour dust is undesirable.

#### **5. Feathers and Muscles: Saag van Wyngaard**

This brings us to the feathers, which must always be soft and silky. Soft feathers is always the cover of soft, supple muscles, so the correlation of soft feathers must always be remembered with quality muscles, there is always talk of weightless smooth muscles which of course is the ideal. When someone takes a pigeon in his hands and the feathers has a way to talk to him/her, then that person has already made good progress with his knowledge of the racing pigeon. The feathers are the most important feature, if anything is wrong with the pigeon's health, you will immediately see it, and vice versa, if the feathers are smooth and silky, and shining in the sun we can assume that the pigeon is in good health. Furthermore, the shaft of the feathers where it comes from the body must not split ("Split Quill"). If the feathers composition is analysed, we know it mainly consists of sulphur and phosphorus. It is therefore desirable that small amounts of ordinary flowers of sulphur or crushed shells be added to feed, especially during moulting (shed). Equally important and even more than all the other parts of the body are the muscles. As we have already mentioned, with the feathers, the muscles must be supple, soft and elastic. If it is touched with the fingertips, the muscle must give away or the fingers must be able to sink in the flesh. It should not be as hard as a board feel. We must remember that we are dealing, one could say with athletes and body builders. Furthermore, there is a vibration attend or so-called electric current, indicating that the muscle is alive or set in action. The muscles should not feel mushy, but weightless. It can be readily accepted because the heavier the muscles, the more weight the pigeon must keep in flight. Therefore it must be warned not to exaggerate the muscles and later with a mass of meat barely able to stay in the air. Rather give preference to a pigeon with thinner muscles than to the one that has heavy muscles.

#### **6. Shoulders and Back:**

The shoulders should be broad and strong. The back should be flat, strong, hard and sturdy feel as a person gently squeeze out the back should therefore not easily break when printed out. A flat, hump or crooked spine, should be regarded as serious errors, for which birds may even be disqualified.

## **6. Back: Saag van Wyngaard**

The back of the pigeon is one of the points which must be looked at very carefully. This is where in a good pigeon one of the strengths is recognized. A strong back is not one that is measured by the amount of pressure that can be exerted on it, although it must be strong with the rest of the bones. There can lightly, with the thumb, pressure be applied without injuring the pigeon. The back should be straight and the hump back or turtle back and the crocodile back should be discriminated against. The back not only consist of the backbone, but the ribs that are attached to it as well, so that it forms a unit. Then, when looking at the back, press with the thumbs the wings away from the body. It should be wide between the shoulders and go in a wedge shape towards the tail, and concludes with a narrow tip to the tail. At the top it should run straight, and should not have a hollow place at the tail. When the pigeon are held with the thumb on the back and the middle finger on the breastbone, the thumb should smoothly slide from between the shoulders to the tail without getting stuck.

## **7. Breast:**

The chest of a good racing pigeon full, well-muscled, rounded and stretched far forward. If the feet of the pigeon between the forefinger and middle finger of the left hand clutched up and the breast of a pigeon resting on the palm of the right hand should the impression of fullness and good width create. The chest should be long, straight and the back as closely as possible and be in line with the vent bones. Depressed or distorted breast bones are a mistake and should be discriminated against.

## **8. Vent bones:**

The vent bones must be strong, straight and long. The chest must extend far back stretch, so that the tip of the breastbone to or near the vent bones. A "Vent" of no more than a finger width in males and slightly wider for females.

## **7. Breast and Vent bones: Saag van Wyngaard**

The chest should end fairly deep, long, straight and the rear point should be as close as possible, no more than a finger width in males and slightly wider in females and in line with the vent bones. The chest should be full, well-muscled, rounded and stretched far forward. The vent bones must be strong, straight and long.

## **9. Wings:**

The wings should tidy up and carried on the body. The folded flight feathers rest neatly on the tail with the ends of the two wings together or pretty close to each other. The wing muscles must be well developed, especially the bicep muscle, i.e., the muscle that felt the wing section, where the wing links up with the body. The board-like, limp and hanging wings is an indication of poor muscle development and should be avoided. The Primary wing pins (flight feathers) must mean to be a fairly narrow width and beautiful together links up. When the wing is opened, should there are no large gaps between the pins. The secondary wing feathers are shorter than the primary wing feathers and should extend to the back pretty far, adapt well together and a curved downward bending show. The wings must show a glossy, with a lot of white flour dust on the pegs. The wings should not be long and flat images.

## **8. Wing: Saag van Wyngaard**

The wing is very interesting compiled and consists of a series of levers, namely the arm, fore-arm and the hand. The ideal of every pigeon fancier is to shorten the arm and the fore-arm and extend the hand as much as possible. The shorter the arm, the easier it is for the pigeon to move its wings. The arm and fore-arm are in direct relation to each other, because in general, the shorter the fore-arm, the shorter the arm. The fore-arm also has the part behind the wing where the secondary feathers are situated. Look at that part when the wing is wide open, it should be as narrow as possible, in other words, the secondary pins should be short so that the pigeon can use it to float, but also to clap along quickly, otherwise it falls to the ground. These are the parts of the wing which is a sign of a good racing pigeon. Since we are working on writing a book, the pupil of the day should focus on the reasons why certain parts are located in a certain place of the wing. But what must be stated is that the primary flight feathers should be as narrow as possible and that there should be a definite reasonable opening at the ends of the last three feathers. Furthermore, it displays it clear as the wing is opened the right way.

**10. Tail:**

The length and width must be able to adapt well to the body and should not exceed one and to see a half feathers width. The tail should not hang or show an upward trend, but pretty worn in a line with the body.

**11. Legs and feet:**

The legs and feet colour usually adapt to the colour of the pigeon in particular at a young age, but must be coloured rich. It should be sturdy and well placed, without X display-type legs, for which a pigeon could be disqualified.

**12. Body and Balance:**

The body must produce a good width, depth and muscularity. When a pigeon in a stand possession he must have a good balance, even as he walked.

**9. Balance: Saag van Wyngaard**

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**13. Faults:**

1. Slight uncoloured eyes.
2. Specific crooked beak.
3. Split foot.
4. Sunken eyes and drooping eyelids.
5. Long flat nose type head.
6. Male with very feminine head.
7. Long slender neck and legs.
8. Long and limp wings.
9. Hang wings.
10. Large gaps between wing pins.
11. Distorted, undeveloped (poor) wing and tail pins.
12. Dull coloured, worn feathers.
13. Split quills.
14. Pierced feathers.
15. Gap between primary and secondary wing pins.
16. Bad back that easily dent.
17. Poor muscular chest.
18. Hang tail or weak tail connection.
19. Slight curved breastbone.
20. Vent too wide.

**14. Disqualifications:**

1. Very uncoloured eyes, except for pigeons.
2. Not too split pupil.
3. Pearl on view.
4. Crooked foot.
5. Crooked neck.
6. Leaning back.
7. Hump back and jagged back. (Crocodile back)
8. Crooked toes.
9. Very crooked sternum.
10. Depressed breastbone.
11. X - bones.

## **A number of important aspects to successfully perform the Pigeon sports.**

### **Racing Pigeons.**

#### **Providing of pigeons**

When you decide to start a breed, make sure you really feel up to racing pigeons for the responsibility. The pigeon sport is one of the nicest sports one can get. You can relax with your pigeons compete, succeed and make a lot of friends.

Make effort to visit other breeders' lofts, consult experienced pigeons lovers and buy according to your budget. Just remember one thing when you want to pay you will get good birds if not and you buy with crumbs you get crumbs. Supply and demand always determined the price, but there are pigeons lovers who will sell you good pigeons at a reasonable price, just for the sake of promoting the sport. Never involuntarily take boxes full of pigeons at all it is often cull birds of which the breeder wants to get rid of and then you sit with the pigeons. When you bought the pigeons, you do not just immediately take them into your lofts. Treat each individual pigeon with the medicines available for external parasites. Then treat each pigeon against crop/throat cancer. Then treat your pigeons for three days against bacterial contamination. Put vitamins in the drinking water for five days. Now you treat them again for three days against coccidiosis and then for three days with ESB3 or Amprol. Then again water with vitamins for five days and then treat for internal parasites. All of the above medicines and vitamins are available at a pet or pigeon supplies store.

### **The effective pigeons, cage hygiene, care and feeding.**

#### **The effective pigeon loft**

The pigeon loft must be built efficiently and economically. The pigeons are a personal choice, but the choice can bring grief and work out very expensive. Always try from the beginning to plan and build the best possible way for your particular kind of pigeons. Adjustments can be made later, but it can cause fruitless expenditure. Take, if you are permitted, photos of other lofts to be used in the planning process. Do not be hasty.

#### **Location**

This is mainly determined by the space on your site. Determine the location so that you (and your family) can enjoy the sport. In other words, so that you can comfortably see the pigeons and hear them. What concerns hearing; you must remember that a pigeon is a real fighter and will even fly in the dark with other birds during the breeding season. If you hear something is wrong in the loft, you can come to the rescue of many problems, even in the case of undesirable elements.

The ideal location is determined by the prevailing winds and the direction from which the rain usually comes in your region. A widely accepted fact is that a loft should not front South or West. Whatever the prevailing natural conditions, the location of the enclosure must be such that rain and the cold/hot winds are not admitted directly into your loft. These elements should be excluded because in this part of your loft there will be rest and nesting areas set up, in other words, quiet, dry and minimum wind in the area. If at all possible, you should allow the sun at least for a certain time in the morning in your lofts or sun lofts.

#### **Structure**

Here the choice is between building bricks (including concrete blocks), wood or steel. (You should always keep the ordinances of the Local Authority in mind, otherwise you may encounter problems.) Wood is hotter and requires less maintenance. Wood, however, creates the possibility of parasites in the grooves and crevices, although it can be prevented. At least the rear wall and two side walls must be constructed of solid material. The front and partition between sections can be built according to your choice. Wire mesh or netting (small eyes) attached to wood or steel frames are recommended.

The roof is once again a choice between corrugated iron and asbestos. The latter allows less cold and heat through, and is preferable. However, if there is sufficient ventilation, there is nothing wrong to fit on a corrugated iron roof. To further reduce the heat inside your loft, paint the roof white on top. It can lower the temperature by up to 5 degrees.

Ensure that you have plenty of gates (doors) to and from lofts and sun lofts and build the gates so that you can walk straight-up into the loft.

If breeding with different breeds, each breed should have their breeding loft. There should be a separate section for young pigeons (weaned). They experience a lot of stress and should be able to be calm to adapt to the environment, especially eating and drinking water is a big concern.

#### **Wooden or cement floor**

In hot areas a concrete floor is preferable. It is cooler and easier to clean. In areas such as the Cape, where winter rains occur, wooden floors are better to make the lofts warmer and will also reduce costs.

#### **Fresh light**

The sun is the main source of light and it is sufficient in our country; use it. It is not necessary that the sun shine directly into the loft, as long as there is sufficient light. Sunlight is and remains the most effective means of disinfection. Germs thrive in dark, warm and humid lofts and breeding areas, but look where the wild pigeons built their nests. Sunlight contributes greatly to the health and vitality of our pigeons. If you work long hours and you are out early in the morning and come home late at night, it is desirable to have electric lighting (not strong bulbs, but fluorescent lights) in the pigeon lofts. It gives you the opportunity to relax at the pigeons and make the necessary observation. This will provide enough time for the pigeons to eat and drink water. Especially at night they sometimes drink too little water and when they are sent to the racing area without enough water then they cannot digest their food properly.

#### **Fresh air**

It can never be stressed enough that there should be good air conditioning in the lofts and that there should be enough fresh air available for each pigeon. Did you know that a pigeon weigh about 450 grams and that they need 1¼ litre of oxygen per hour or 30 litres (pure oxygen) in 24 hours, so 660 litres of air is used per pigeon. Old air must escape and must constantly be replaced with fresh air. Excessive heat and humidity should be avoided at all times. A pigeon take a breath on average 40-50 times per minute so we can understand how much fresh air they really need.

#### **Temperature and Humidity**

Fluctuations in temperature should be avoided. Cold has a less harmful effect on a pigeon than heat. Pigeons do not sweat, but the entire body temperature is controlled by the respiratory system. Moisture is the pigeon's worst enemy. There should if at all possible, be no rain able to get in the loft. There should be sails that can be rolled down to protect the lofts from rain and extreme cold or hot winds.

#### **Sun lofts**

The sun lofts must be made in front of the breeding loft, chicken wire or wire mesh can be used and the sun lofts is only wire with no solid roof or sides, you can if you want to put shade netting over the top part. The gaps of the wire must be small enough to keep wild birds out. Note that breeding pigeons usually all are held in breeding pens, and they get too little exercise and therefore sun lofts are very important. This is the area where they can relax quietly in direct sunlight, they can easily fly and practice here than in normal cages, sometimes with limited space. As in the other sections of the lofts, there should be perches in the sun lofts that pigeons as individuals, can sit back and enjoy the open air. Another major advantage of sun lofts is that breeding pairs are almost undisturbed to mate and the chances for infertile eggs are almost completely eliminated.



Examples of wooden lofts. Left is the lofts of Johan and Lee Munnik in Gauteng and right the lofts of Kevin and Christine Keeler in England.



Examples of individual breeding lofts/cages, left Harry Munnik's Cropper breeding lofts and left Helge Warild's breeding cages.



Examples of sun lofts in front of the breeding lofts

**Care**

Pigeons must be enabled to perform. The Racing Pigeon is in competition with other birds during races and shows where a good feather quality plays a very important role. Only the owner can get the Racing Pigeon to perform and it is only possible with good care.

**Drinking water**

It is imperative that the pigeons must have clean water every day, but not in open bowls. The pigeon loves baths and as an open bowl of water is made available to the pigeon, he/she will bath in it. Make use of water troughs where the pigeon must put its head in to drink, where the pigeons cannot sit and leave droppings in the water and that no dirt can blow in. It is also here where concrete floors are desirable so that water bowls stand on hard surfaces and thus minimise dirt in the water. Wash out the water cisterns with a good detergent at least three times a week to disinfect. Rinse with clean water so that no disinfectants get stuck inside the water bowls.

**Food**

Ensure that pigeons do not get too much or too little food. One principle is that when we feed the pigeons and the first pigeons go to drink water, the food can be removed, because they have eaten enough. Another use is to measure the food on the basis of a full dessert spoon in the morning and half of it in the afternoon. Here the size of the particular kind of pigeon must be taken into account. An important aspect is that too much food, just like in humans, leaves room for fat build-up inside the pigeon. This can cause egg need, listlessness at mating and babies that are fed poorly; it is in any case unnecessary expenses. A pigeon will eat lots of food if given and cannot be calm, especially at night, on a congested crop.

**Very important:**

- a) Grit, loamy soil and salt must in whatever form, always be to the disposal of pigeons;
- b) Forage should be fed twice a week;
- c) Oil can be rubbed into the grain and only be applied once a week. Vitamin A and D are required only in small amounts;
- d) Sunlight should be granted access. Direct sunlight is not necessary.

**General tips**

To conclude this section, the following:

- a) Milk is invaluable for young birds as well as for our other pigeons. Give it to them once a week on the basis of 50% milk and 50% water for 24 hours. (The importance of milk is described below.)
- b) Iron and minerals as well as blood purification agents are prescribed by many people: There are several recipes and remedies. Mother Nature's recipe is bitter aloe. The purified product is in powder form and relatively cheap. This prevents both internal and external parasites. Bitter aloe is given once every 14 days on the basis of 1 teaspoon to 15 litres of drinking water for two to three days. When used for bathing purposes, use 4 teaspoons for 10 litres of bathwater. Avoids pigeon flies feather lice and Red mites.
- c) Let the pigeon's bath in warm water at least once a week. Additions like, special bath salts, vinegar, salt (you must be able to taste it) and aloe powder (4 teaspoon on 10 litres of water) is effective.
- d) A Tonic to get the breeders 100% is the clay cakes that are obtainable at pet food producers or can even be produced by oneself. Pigeons are fond of it and the results speak for themselves.
- e) No wild birds should have access to lofts and sun lofts not even rodents. Avoid the habit to leave food late in cages, especially during the night and store in tight closing containers to keep it pure and to keep well-known pests out (e.g. a Steri Nappi - Bucket works perfectly).

**Milk contains:**

Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin) - plays a role in sugar, protein and fat of the pigeon. It is in complex relationship with the rest of the vitamins. Riboflavin increases the fertility of birds and prevent occurrence of unfertile eggs. Lack of Vitamin B2 can bring the development of the embryo to a stop.

**Nicotinic acid** - is crucial to the pigeon. These products are not normally accessible to the pigeon. Therefore, much emphasis is laid on by experts in the administration of milk to pigeons feeding babies.



**Pantothenic acid** - has an influence on the laying activity of the females and determines the percentage fertility of eggs. A shortage of this also causes a disturbance in the development of the feathers. The administration of milk is one of the treatment methods.

**Vitamin A** - Is called the mucosal protective Vitamin. The body also needs vitamin A for his nerves, fertilization and growth. This is also in milk.

**Vitamin D** - With lime and phosphorus plays a major role in the formation of bone. If a young pigeon's legs are unable to carry their body, a deficiency in vitamin D must be suspected. A curved keel may also be a result of such a deficit. Vitamin D is included in the milk.

#### **When milk is applied:**

Let the pigeons drink the bowls empty and put clean water before them. If you want to give milk (in whatever form) for 24 hours, be careful of the climate because sour milk may be more harmful than no milk.

#### **Loft hygiene**

Only a clean cage can accommodate healthy pigeons. Scrape clean the perches and the floors daily with a plate and remove all manure and feathers with a hard brush and remove. Then put a thin layer of lime across the floors. Wipe the lime steadily to the front of the cage so the whole floor is covered, especially wet spots. Lime twice a week is sufficient unless the floor become wet somehow. The lofts walls, perches and breeding nests must be rinsed once a month with "Jeyesfluid" in warm water, dried up and then the floors scrubbed with the same mix. When babies are in nests, it must not be cleaned before they are 8 days old. Then you can enter and wash twice a week and place the nest pans in the sun to dry.

The sun loft's floors are usually of natural soil; here you can pour a layer of about 3 to 4cm clean coarse sand, preferably sea sand. If sea sand is not available, use regular clean sand. Once a week, a thin layer of lime can be sprinkled over the sand three times a week and the sand floor can be gently raked.

Spray cages with Dovine about every six weeks to prevent the promotion of intestinal parasites. It kills all eggs of parasites, germs and bacteria that may be present in the nest almost immediately. You should always keep in mind that the lofts, perches and other surfaces should be clean before any spraying.

## **Breeding and moulting time**

### **1. Breeding Season**

#### **Treatment and observation**

Months before the breeding season one can already start looking at possible mating's with regard to colour, conformation, and other factors that play a role in order to meet the standards to breed good pigeons. Breeding season is normally from June to December. The belief among many old Pigeon lovers is the best young birds are bred during the cold winter months. Then we can realize why lofts cannot be dark, with associated cold.

#### **Treatment**

High demands are made of breeding pairs and therefore they must be healthy to perform with the creation and rearing of young. Beginning three weeks before the breeding pairs are placed together with treatment for at least crop cancer (Meditrich is good preventive agent for this); coccidiosis (ESB3 or Amprol); worms (Mediworm an excellent overall tablet for this purpose) and bacterial contamination - (Tylo Tad plus for ornithosis, mikoplasmose, E-coli). Remember not to give any fodder for the birds if you treat for coccidiosis; it can cause death. Do not follow-up treatment too quickly, about three to five day intervals is sufficient and then build the pigeons' bodies successfully up with vitamins, minerals and acid mixture.

An important part of the cleansing process is nutrition. When we start with the necessary drugs, the food mixture must also be changed. Continue with your usual blend, but add lots of barley. It is simply

to get rid of the fat and facilitate mating. The pigeon's condition will not deteriorate, but it will lose unnecessary weight.

### **Diet during the breeding period**

During this time we must ensure that the parents' diet is sufficient and balanced, because they must feed babies, the protein in the diet should be made more. The feeding process reduces the parents' resistance and the pigeon health can drop. The parents must eat relatively more so that their constitutions can be built after the babies crops are fully pumped with feed. The ration must be complete and should at least contain the following:

**a) Proteins** - may even form half the ration since this will assist in building the tissue structure and therefore extremely essential for healthy growth of the young birds. Pigeon growing pellets contain about 18% protein, 10% fibre, 2% calcium and 1% phosphorus. Apart from the high nutritional value it also promotes bone and suspension due to calcium and phosphorus respectively.

**b) Vitamin and iron** - should be provided to build up strength of both parents and babies. Vitamin B1 works against paralysis in small pigeons and iron prevent anaemia. There are several products on the market with a balanced mix of vitamins, iron, etc. like Befee powder and Phenaminovite. With the former, the food are made moist with garlic oil rubbing it in with both hands and then the powder scattered over and stirred with a spoon so that the powder can cling to the garlic (2 teaspoons garlic oil with 2 teaspoons Beefee powder on a kilogram of feed mixture). Phenaminovite should be mixed with water as directed: Both products as well as garlic oil are relatively cheap. Treat about be 3 to 4 times a week.

**c) Spinach with salt** works wonders twice a week at breeding pigeons and their off spring. Chop spinach and other greens fine and sprinkle lightly with salt. The pigeons become infatuated with it. Submit in bowels, and not on the open floor.

**d) Crushed shells** - are essential for the health of our pigeons and should always be placed at their disposal. This is for the pigeon's condition and provides lime to the body. The natural product is good and contains salt and iodine, but Sparky product is a mixture which also has essential minerals, etc. to build and promote feather quality.

**e) Method of nutrition** - In bowels where the pigeons can climb in and make a mess. It is important that the bowels are not full of food all the time. Breeding pigeons must be conditioned, in other words, they must be introduced to certain feed twice a day. In this way they will eat eagerly and feed the babies better. After the young are fed, there should still be enough food left for the parents to eat.

Do not breed with your pigeon's year in and year out.

### **Concluding tips related to breeding:**

a) Disinfect the pigeons and incubators against external and internal parasites.

b) Treat pigeons individually against external parasites.

c) Treat pigeons for coccidiosis, crop cancer, worms and bacterial contamination.

d) When breeding pairs are paired up, examine each one vent (anus) and remove fog and even excess feathers around the vent to facilitate mating and promote fertilization.

e) Ensure a balanced diet and avoid overfeeding.

f) Fill ration with vitamins, minerals, required hours, iron and protein.

g) Ensure that treated crushed shells are in the cage all the time.

h) Clean nest boxes and pans regularly to prevent flies and associated parasites.

i) Do not use any drugs during breeding season, and if required, treat only individual pairs.

- j) Continuously attempt to keep breeding pairs quiet and clean.
- k) Select strictly and eliminate weak and unwanted babies out.

### **The lay and hatch of eggs**

Now after all the previous, we can start the reality in the breeding pens. Once all the breeding pairs are paired up, and after careful consideration of various factors, open one pair at a time so that they will not be interrupted at the feed and mating for about 15 minutes. This enables them to learn the position of their breeding pen. Straw or pine needles should be made available on the floor of the loft so that the males can fly up and down with the pine needles to build the nest. Both male and female will build the nest very carefully. (Make sure, however, that there are enough nesting material in the breeding loft because it keeps the male busy and happy and keep the pair close to their nests.)

Females are mated several times a day and if all be successful, the first egg will be laid after 6 to 10 days. The egg fertilized only 42 hours before being laid. (With this in mind you can use a stud male that are not paired with the female, but brought to her at the crucial time when she wants to mate to fertilize her. This way he can mate to 4 to 6 females and the eggs will be fertilized and the young are then hatched and reared by another male.)

The first egg is usually laid in the late afternoon, between 5 and 6 pm. Females who are very broody, sit on the nest after the first egg is laid. It is not desirable for the eggs are laid two days apart and will also hatch two days apart. The first baby will then be fed crop milk and after two days when the second baby hatch he will usually be left alone and not fed. So some pigeon lovers take the first egg away and return it as soon as the second egg is laid. (Remember then to turn the egg twice a day.)

The second egg is laid two days later, but in this case usually between 2 and 3 pm. The parents sit 18 days on the eggs and relief each other at regular intervals. Normally the babies appear on the 18/19th day. From this point to the 6th day the babies just get Crop milk. On the 6/7th day you will already find solid food in the baby's crops. On the 8th day the baby must be ringed with the prescribed ring. It is not desirable for a pair of pigeons too raise a pair of babies more than 6 times in a season and in the case of young yearling pigeons only 4 and no more than two sets of eggs. Here it is good to make use of foster parents.



**Pigeon nest with two eggs**



**Nest pan with two healthy babies**



The pictures show exactly how to ring a baby pigeon. Hold the bird in the left hand and then:  
**Left: Pull ring over the three front toes of the baby.**

**Middle: Pull the ring to the back over the back toe. This will not hurt the baby because the toe is flexible.**

**Right: Pull the hind toe out from under the ring so that all the toes are beneath the ring.**

#### **Observation during the breeding season**

We can already see after five days whether the eggs have been fertilized. If the eggs are darker in colour, it can be assumed with certainty that everything is in order. If in doubt, the eggs can be examined by holding it to the sun or on a light. If it is fertile, the embryo with blood veins be clearly seen, otherwise it will be virtually transparent and worthless.

#### **Taking care of babies**

This is a very important aspect for the breeding of future champions. First, there must be clean water available at all times. Then a balanced diet must be made available to the parents by introducing an effective breeding mixture. This mixture should contain shelled sunflower, peanuts, linseed and protein-rich seeds, e.g. canary seed. Give enough food so that there is a little left, so that the parents can allow their bodies to build and maintain good condition. After the age of about eight days, a brewer's yeast tablet (especially for pigeons) can be given to every baby twice a week; it performs absolute miracles. Administration of vitamins is another very important aspect, as well as natural minerals and acids.

If you decide to separate a pair of pigeons, remember that if there are babies in the nest, the mother will not feed them until weaning, but the father will. A female will after a day or two simply leave the young, while the male will feed them to even after weaning. Weaning usually takes place on 30/32 days old or when the young can feed themselves. Some young, however, developed faster than others, but we should never take babies from their parents before the feathers under the wings are not covered 100%. Time plays a role, but the latter aspect is the most important thing to remember.

#### **Weaning of baby pigeons**



The two photos show left a baby who cannot yet be weaned. You can see that the youngster is naked under his wings. At right is a photo of a baby that is ready to be weaned, feathers is fully grown under the wing.

After baby pigeons are weaned, the process of care does not end. On the contrary, it must be given special care. Now they have to get the right nutrition with also the necessary vitamins, minerals, and so on. Please check that they drink enough water, it is extremely important. Give pigeon's normal diet and also a mixture of special grains.

#### **Some tips regarding the care of babies**

- a) Provide a high protein ration, oilseeds, iron and integrated vitamins must be available to parents during nest feeding and the weaning stage of the young;
- b) Take babies away from older birds, in a special cage on their own;
- c) Teach young birds early to eat forage;
- d) Provide crushed shells (Sparky's enriched mixture);
- e) Observe whether all the babies eat enough and drink clean water, for at least the first 2 days after weaning and assist where necessary - particularly water-related;
- f) Water and feeding bowls in the nest cages, must be placed so that the minimum wastage take place, this makes a great contribution to the babies eating habits at an early stage.

#### **Moulting time**

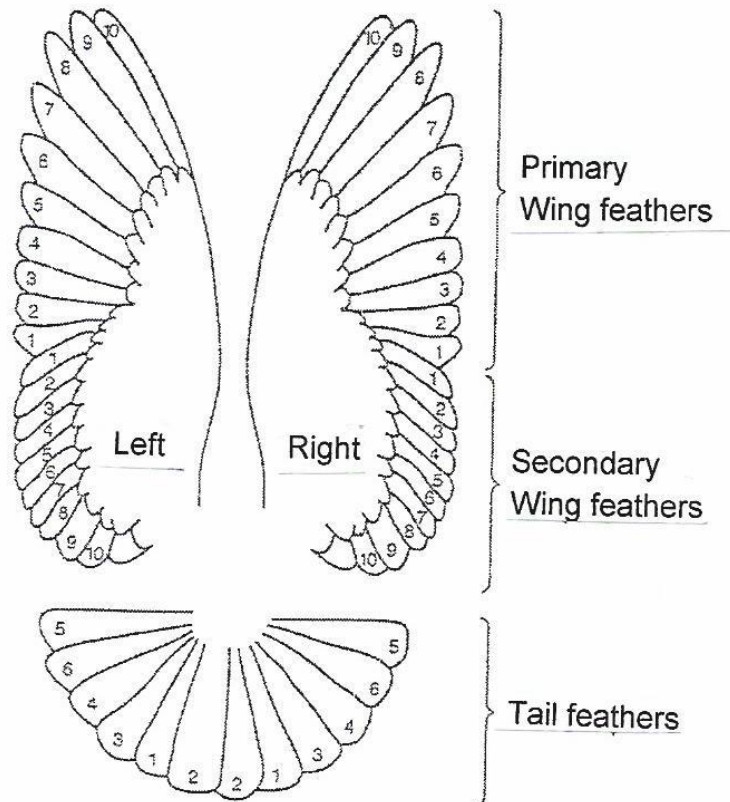
It is usually classified as the off-season. This applies to the pigeons only and not to the boss. They must now left to moult in their own time without obligations of breeding and rearing young and the young must now develop into a pride for the boss. The basis of treatment with breeding and moulting time is almost the same. However, there are differences. This period is usually from mid-January to mid-May. The first step is to separate the males and females apart, also the same with the young birds as soon as they show their sex. This means that our old males and young males and females and old females must be in separate lofts. The young birds are still in a process of growth and needs special attention, care and nutrition. As far as possible the nests from the lofts must be removed and if it is impossible, the nests must be closed up so that the pigeons cannot sleep in it. Only a healthy pigeon will normally moult and develop beautiful feathers.

Once you have separated the breeding pairs and young birds, always start with the treatment of worms, coccidiosis, crop cancer and bacterial infections as discussed earlier in the breeding season. First, we must realize that moulting time a nearly illness is. A pigeon literally throws thousands of feathers and each of them will be replaced. In the process, a lot of body strength is lost because the new feathers are filled with blood. With the foregoing in mind, we will realize what the pigeon's body must endure. In the process, we serve more medicine to prevent diseases; it breaks down the body. So if we break it down, we should also build it up. Here are two basic factors of utmost importance, viz. Do not give treatment too quickly together, always work on 3 to 5 days intervals; - build up the body during such interruptions with vitamins, minerals, acids, etc..

#### **The Moulting proses of pigeons**

As already indicated the moulting find place as a result of a change in hormone production, which can be attributed to the length of the day that is getting shorter. The process starts slowly at the end of December and is usually complete by late April to late May with old pigeons that are not used for breeding or racing purposes up to October. Pigeons that hatched before 15 October complete their moult at end of April. Pigeons that hatch later will moult accordingly later. Healthy young pigeons take five to six months and old pigeons four months to complete the process.

The primary and tail feathers moult more or less simultaneously. The secondary feathers begin to moult after the primary feathers and will be completed about a month later. Once the seventh primary feather fell, pigeons will then moult their back and coverts almost simultaneously. When the neck feathers begin to moult, the moulting proses are almost complete. Pigeons will only moult effectively if they are moulting completely healthy, free of parasites and body reserves and nutritional status is optimal.



**The moulting proses of a pigeon numbered in accordance with order in which they moult.**

### **Pigeon Diseases**

We are now going to develop more on the subject because it is such an extremely important aspect of the pigeon sport. Dr. Robey Joyce called it the dark side of our beloved sport. One day everything seems to be in order and the next day you see a pigeon looking ill or even dead, or a pigeon that do not eat at all and sit alone one side, greenish blotches droppings or a pigeon sneezing and trying to scratch his/her wattle with the leg. It is here where the pigeon lover and the pigeon fancier are separated. Although all of us at some time suffer a setback with disease in birds, the pigeon fancier will notice an illness very soon because he is constantly when at all possible with his pigeons. He will immediately rectify problems before it is too late; usually with success and without loss.

The pigeon lover with a large number of pigeons and most probably with lack of time to actually properly observe will only see a problem when a pigeon or pigeons are already dead. He does not have a clue of a possible cause, because he did not have time, does not read or listen and does not believe in prevention.

The saying goes, prevention is better than cure. Treat your pigeons three or four times a year, as described under "breeding season", "moult" and "Showtime". Please do not give you pigeon's antibiotics and other drugs week after week. Avoid flock management as an ongoing process it is best to deal with individuals out of season. Continued treatment may do more harm than good and break a pigeon's off and create shortages that could even cause infertility.

The best barometer to see if pigeons are healthy, are there droppings early in the morning before they become active. If the dropping is a solid ball with a white cap (urine) form then everything is in order. Secondly take note during the day of their wattles. If it is white, there are no problems, but if they show a dirty grey colour, everything is not right, and you can refer to pigeon illnesses in order to note the symptoms, diagnosis and treatment.

**The following diseases are transmitted from pigeons to humans:**

**(a) Ornithosis** - is a psittacose type of virus disease transmitted by infected excreta or droplets from the respiratory system to humans.

**(b) Encephalitis** - A group of viral diseases that affect the central nervous system, is transmitted by mosquitoes from the pigeon to the man.

**(c) Newcastle disease** - It is a highly contagious and fatal neuropneumonie (Nerve and Lung condition) of birds, including domestic birds, caused by a virus and is found among people, although very rarely. Pigeons should be treated with a vaccine.

**(d) Aspergillosis** - This fungus (mould) disease of the human ear, sinuses, lung and fat caused by *Aspergillus fumigates*, is common in pigeons. Because this fungus is so ever-present, pigeon's is not regarded as a major source of human infection.

**(e) Sprue (Thrush)** - which is a fungal infection of the mouth, respiratory area, skin and fingernails in humans, a high mortality rate is caused in birds, particularly among young pigeons.

**(f) Histoplasmosis** - This systematic fungus disease in humans can be gained while dusty pigeon droppings that contain the fungus is picked up. Furthermore, this dusty pigeon droppings is a fertile culture source for the development of fungal spores falling from the air sifting down.

**(g) Cryptococcosis** - Like histoplasmosis it is a systemic fungal infection of humans, which is associated with pigeon droppings.

**(h) Toxoplasmosis** - which is a protozoal infection of humans and other animals are often found among pigeons. The method of transmission is made possible by droplet infection (such as whooping cough, for example), contamination of droppings of external parasites for example flies, fleas and ticks.

**(i) Food Contamination** - by pigeon droppings is a major economic and public health problem. Can you imagine all the grain is infected with pigeon droppings.

**(j) The common housefly** breeding in pigeon droppings and pigeon nests and can create a tremendous health problem.

**(k) The external parasites** of pigeons namely ticks, fleas, etc. can cause people to bitten and severe skin conditions.

The above is not to scare people to practice the pigeon sport. Not at all. It is intended only for you to think about what might happen with hygiene which is always the most important aspect of our sport. Now on to pigeons them self. Only the most important aspects of the disease and symptoms are given to you.

## **Cancer**

We begin with this condition because, in my opinion it, is the most feared and crippling pigeon disease. Dr. Joyce calls it a silent killer.

### **Symptoms (chronic)**

If the almond or curtain was affected in the throat, there will always be some of the combs missing.

### **Symptoms (Acute)**

The young pigeon in the nest is lust less, feathers appear dull and stand up, the droppings is very watery. The crop of the bird is large and full of dry food and body is relatively small and appear thin. If the mouth is opened, you will see the yellow cheese like substance on or behind the almond. If this reached the intestine and liver, the pigeon would have lost a lot of weight (phenomenon called "going light") and will die. Even the navel or yolk sac can be affected in many young pigeons and thence spread to the liver, lungs, brain and heart.

**Mode of transmission**

- (a) Parents feed the babies with crop milk teeming with Trichomonas virus;
- (b) Older birds contaminate each other in various ways (also at a show in adjacent pens).

If the pigeon's almond or curtain is intact it does not necessarily mean that the pigeon never had cancer or maybe a carrier of it. A carrier is precisely an individual or organism which carry germ, but you do not have the disease.

Treat with medication.

**Coccidiosis**

Besides cancer, it is undoubtedly the most important disease affecting pigeons. As in the case of cancer, we will not get a pigeon that has not been infected with one or other form of coccidiosis. Why this is of great importance is the fact that the coccidian is hiding in the lining of the bowel, then the egg form or cosiste will be discharged outside the body, ie on the floor and within 2-6 days it will divide in four sporablastes. At this stage, the egg form is completely harmless, but if the sporablaste change in sporozoiete, the egg form can be very contagious. It is extremely important that the hygiene of the cage be irreproachable that the development of the infectious form which take 2-8 days, cannot take place.

**Symptoms**

If the infection is light in nature, we will see all most no symptoms because the pigeons have a natural immunity to the disease and because the disease is a slow progressor. If the pigeon has a serious infection it is usually puffed up and the droppings are watery and, sometimes bloody. Often the blob is completely watery with a grass green snake like dropping in the middle. The pigeon is listless, lacking appetite and if you look in the eye during the day, not only will the gloss disappear, but the iris, or colour of the eye will have faded. The pigeon is always thirsty and will lose weight until just a bunch of feathers are left. The pigeon will be very weak and will lie down most of the time. The disease can easily be confused with cancer and Paratyphoid. The diagnosis in doubtful cases can only be determined by a microscopic examination of droppings.

Cancer and Coccidiosis is actually two dreaded diseases.

Treat with medication.

**Paratyphoid**

It is caused by the Salmonella Typhimurium. Warm, wet weather favours the multiplication of germs and 3 -5 days after appearance of the germs the disease will appear.

**Symptoms**

- (a) Swelling of one or more joints does not necessarily be present. The joints in the wing are mostly affected. Swelling of the joints of the wings or legs is more common with females. If a wing is affected, the sick pigeon will stay on the ground.
- (b) Loss of appetite, loose, greenish diarrhoea and inflammation of the mucous membranes of the eyes developed quickly. The pigeon will be puffed-up, blow the crop up and the feathers will stand up. The feathers at the exit is polluted and the pigeon will not clean his feathers with its beak or comb them in the right position. The pigeon loses weight quickly. He will often turn his neck skew, push the head and neck backward so that he sometimes topples over.
- (c) Young pigeons are mostly affected and die embryo can even die in the egg laid by a sick female. Males may also carry the seed in the sperm and may carry it on to the unborn baby pigeons in nest pan will also not grow and the stomach are always watery, the neck also turns in snake-like movements and swelling of the joints show that it certainly has paratyphoid.

Treat with medication. (Sulpha medicines will play a major role in treatment.)

**One eye inflammation - (One eye cold)**

Rarely, if ever, affects both eyes; hence the name. The cause is not a virus, as in the case ornithosis, but rather a bacterium or germ.



**Symptoms**

The mucous membrane of the eye is extremely inflamed, ie. red and watery, as well as the eyelids. The pigeon does not seem ill at all, except that the eye is often in pain and itching. Because of the pain and itching we will see that pigeons scratch the eye with the leg or try rubbing it against the wings.

Treatment: An excellent way for this is 'I-see' eye ointment - administration 3 to 4 days. There are also "one eye cold" remedies available.

**Ornithosis and Psittacosis**

The two diseases are very closely related. Where psittacosis will mainly be found among ducks ornithosis can appear among birds, pigeons and sometimes small mammals. The Ornithosis virus is extremely contagious. This condition is easily confused with single eye inflammation and it can also be transmitted to humans. Our pigeons are primarily affected by canaries and parakeets.

**Symptoms**

(a) For birds' - Weight loss as a result of diarrhoea and loss of appetite. Some birds can die without showing their symptoms. Due to the resistance reduction Paratyphoid or cancer can still intervene and can make this even more complicated. The disease affects both babies in the nest as well as adult pigeons. In adult pigeons diagnosis can easily be made after death because of the enlarged liver and spleen. The most common outward signs, of course, the eye is swollen (one eye), violation of the wattle that it is dirty grey and which can discharge yellow like liquid. The pigeon will be sneezing and a wheezing like breathing as if a mucous is in the airways. The affected pigeon can also be lame while the loose droppings will green and cannot be distinguished naturally to Salmonellosis.

(b) The human psittacosis one will get conscious disturbance, painful gland swelling and lung phenomena at Alipiese Pneumonia. This course so fast that one cannot take countermeasures.

**Newcastle Disease**

The disease consists of more than thirty families, some of which will wreak havoc within days, while others are less dangerous.

**Symptoms**

(a) Since the disease affects the upper respiratory tract, sick pigeons will definitely have trouble breathing.

(b) The eyes are closed to a crack, the wings hang limply and the pigeon looks like he is lame.

(c) Nerve disorders occur when the virus enters the brain tissue. The neck is jerky pulled backwards, the head under the wing or tucked between the legs and sometimes the pigeon will do complete somersaults.

Pigeons should be treated with a vaccine.

**PMV - Paramyxovirus****Cause and Symptoms**

Paramyxovirus or PMV-1 is a viral infection unique to pigeons and is extremely contagious, especially in the racing sport where hundreds or thousands of birds are mixed and confined prior to release.

Direct contact or indirect contact through contaminated feed, water or litter can spread the disease.

Symptoms include extremely loose, watery droppings, lack of appetite, ruffled feathers poor coordination and sometimes paralysis of wings and legs. In advanced stages birds will show "twisted neck" symptoms and many birds will die.

**Prevention**

Currently the only effective means of protection is by vaccination with the Maine Biological oil-adjuvant PMV-1 vaccine. Many fanciers are using the LaSota vaccine, thinking that they are protecting their birds, but challenge tests using LaSota vaccine was not effective in producing antibodies for the pigeon PMV-1 virus. While the LaSota vaccine was effective for short duration, protection for Newcastle's disease, as this disease is almost non-existent in pigeons and should be differentiated from PMV-1.

Pigeons should be treated with a vaccine.

## Pigeon Pox

This disease is caused by a filterable virus and considered one of the most important pigeon diseases. Pox affects either the mucous membrane, and then is called "Differoïd" or it affects the skin and is then called "Pox". If both parts are affected equally, we call it "Pox Differoïd". The mucous membrane form that mainly affects the throat is the severe form in contrast to the skin form which pigeons can often heal. Pigeon pox is transmitted by mosquitoes.

### Symptoms

(a) Mucous membrane form: Redness and swelling of the mucous membranes of the mouth and pharynx are detected in the early stages. Later dirty yellow stain arises that turns into yellow cheesy growths. If this growth goes up to the edge of the beak it makes it difficult for proper closure of the mouth. It could also go further down the throat to the crop or the lining of the windpipe to the air sacs. In the latter case, the sick pigeon will breathe hard and wheezing.

(b) Skin rot: Here the damage appears on the outside of the foot, the wattle and eyelids. Usually the birds' general condition is affected much less than the mucous membrane.

(c) Composite form (Smallpox-Differoïd): It is in the nature of the case the most serious form. The pigeons are in the beginning nervous, struggling to peck at grain, and finally will get so thin that the victim expires.

Pigeons should be vaccinated with a vaccine against pigeons pocks.

This was then something about pigeon illness, with thanks and appreciation to dr. Robey Joyce. The aim of the foregoing is to convey important information to fellow pigeon lovers and to promote the sport. We can once again focus on hygiene, but at the same time we should not have any allergy to demonstrate practice of pigeon sport not our Heavenly Father for peace with condolences to others who are not so lucky.

In conclusion I would like to mention a few precautions, because without them anything we have to say about pigeon illness may not be complete.

### Therefore -

(a) If it is even possible, dispose of all carriers;

(b) Mice, sparrows and wild pigeons should have no access to lofts or sun lofts ;

(c) A clean, dry loft prevents germs and bacteria to develop. Lime can be scattered on the ground after the lofts are cleaned.

If the floors are of wood or cement, it can be washed twice a week with a normal saline solution or "Jeyesfluid";

(d) Feed the pigeons in specially crafted bowls where the pigeons cannot get in and leave droppings, and make sure that water bowls are properly covered so that pigeons cannot bathe in it. Clean the food and drink bowls at least three times a week and leave them for an hour or two in direct sun;

(e) Feed should be stored in containers with a lid so that rats and mice cannot come in and contaminate it;

(f) Always try to build your loft so that a maximum amount of light is used and the morning sun can shine inside. Fresh air should be sufficient;

(g) Dust nest boxes and nest pans regularly with insecticide powder, not to babies who are not covered with feathers;

(h) Do not smoke in the pigeon loft and should and do not handle baby pigeons, with dirty hands;

(i) Keep sick pigeons separately (special hospital loft).

# Preparing for Racing Pigeon Shows

## Introduction:

The preparation of show pigeons differ nothing of what young girls should do, in the sense of you cannot the day before the show bathe, cut toenails, wash hair, dress with a neat piece of clothing, spray perfume and you will be ready!

You will not feel comfortable in tight clothing and keep straightening them, walking on high heels will be a nightmare, and when the room gets hot the makeup will mess up your face. Top of everything else the perfume also smells like cat pee and everyone around you will start sneezing because you were not prepared and trained.

## 1. When starting preparation:

Once moulting time start you must have your ducks in a row, namely:

- 1.1 Pigeons should be treated for external parasites such as the giant mite and feather lice in November month, preferably at the beginning of the month.
- 1.2 The pigeons then start moulting in an order as per sketch.
- 1.3 I believe that most errors have been committed here because we do not know when the birds start moulting where and in what order it happened and what is the names of the different lice.
- 1.4 All birds including foster parents, weak pigeons and all feathers are together treated; otherwise you leave everything and do nothing.

## 2. Preparation at home:

- 2.1 Cut and file nails at least once every three weeks, so that the pigeon is used to walking with short nails (high heels).
- 2.2 File beaks as required by the relevant breed standard, so he/she learns eating with the groomed beaks.
- 2.3 Clean nostrils and likewise gape where feathers sometimes stick, because of a nose that drips.
- 2.4 Where necessary, clean wattles between folds and remove hard powder that stop development. Cut the high wattle gradually and the beard that is not required.
- 2.5 Do not take out unwanted feathers on the feet and coloured feathers on the body until the time is right.
- 2.6 In mid-February you can help the pigeons struggling to moult by plugging two tail feathers and wing pen feathers if they fall behind. NB! Not all at once, then they grow out weak.
- 2.7 Do not cut on wattles end of March, if you want to show the end of April, so that everything is smooth and full of powder as normal.

## 3. Preparing for shows:

Shows normally start end of April. About two weeks before the first show, finish off the trimming.

- 3.1 Cut unwanted feathers, as in Gazzi Modenas and marked pigeons or whatever bother you.
- 3.2 File toenails about five days before the show.
- 3.3 Remove unwanted feathers between toes and lower legs and clean the legs and feet with a mixture of whiskey, white vinegar and glycerine. The mixture will remove the dead skin and leave the legs and feet with a neat natural colour. Wound - oil can also be used.
- 3.4 Wednesday before the show clean the beak but only slightly so that no visible marks are left.
- 3.5 Friday night or Saturday morning clean the legs and feet gently with the cleaning mixture only to take off the dust.
- 3.6 The only breed that I'm aware of that it helps to clear the blend off the mouth also is the Show Flight as its standard asking for a red glow. The other breeds will look unnatural with black beaks and can be classified as over- trim.

## 4. Summary:

- 4.1 If you, since you start to prepare the pigeons for show also start training and coaching them in the prescribed walking or judging pens, then your 10% contribution is complete.

4.2 Remember preparation and coaching does not make a pigeon better, it just rounds the pigeon off and then he asks for the 1<sup>st</sup> price. Nobody is going to a formal function with sneakers and a tracksuit and expect to go in.

**Information obtained from:**

1. "A number of important aspects to successfully perform the Fancy Pigeon sport" Chris Blaauw.
2. "Guide for Racing Pigeon" by the late Saag van Wyngaard.
3. "Preparing Show pigeons" by the late Wynand Wessels.
4. "Relax with pigeons" by Dr. Robey Joyce.

The following people also provided input to the development of the document, namely:

**Attie van Aswegen - Compilation of the document and execution/implementation on SA National Youth Show Forum.**

**The late Chris van den Berg - Input regarding the papers and editing of the document.**

**Rodney Stevens - Compilation of previous question paper and answer sheets.**

**Wim van Rensburg - Inputs regarding assessment.**

**Christo Munnik - Final editing of the document and the translation of the document.**

2011-01-31

Revise - 2012-02-10

Revise - 2016-11-30

Attie van Aswegen

**Translation – Christo Munnik**

2017-03-14

## **Judging**

**Each Exhibitors shows one Pigeon.**

**Preparation: Fancy Pigeons or Racing Pigeons**

**Cleaning Necessities;**

**The exhibitors must unpack his / her cleaning items, then each item must be described and what it issued for.**

**The Pigeon should be made “show ready” at home at least 3 days before the show and bathed in a bath mixture.**

**Toenails and Beak must be trimmed and filed at least 3 days before the show..**

**The Judge must handle the Pigeon to see if the Pigeon has bathed, and the condition of the bird, also if it is free of parasites and pin holes in the feathers.**

**He must also look at the beak and toenails to see if they have been cut and filed. He must check the legs and toes have been wiped off and that the feathers have not been wiped with an ointment.**

**The exhibitors must handle the pigeon.**

**Judging and Showmanship:**

**Fancy Pigeons and Racing Pigeons**

**General Appearance.**

**The exhibitor must describe the pigeon’s type. He / She must describe the pigeon from head to toes according to the Pigeons standard**

**The exhibitor must judge the Pigeon showing its good and bad points as well as all the disqualifications.**

**The Judge must also ask the Exhibitors questions to determine if his / her knowledge of the pigeon.**

**Deceases:**

**The exhibitor must name deceases, Discuss it and the Medication and Treatment (E.g. Inoculation and Medication]**

**The exhibitor must during the Judging make the Pigeon show / Preform**

**Points are given for the neatness of the Exhibitor, the Exhibitors love for and the feeling toward the pigeon, and the Presentation of the Pigeon during judging**

Attie van Aswegen

\*2012-02-10 Revise - Attie van Aswegen

\*2016-11-19 Revise - Attie van Aswegen

**Translation – Christo Munnik.**

2017-03-14

## **Extra information.**

### **Working Homer Standard**

Adopted 2011

(Approved by: the NPA Standards Committee,  
January 1999 - at Myrtle Beach Grand National)

This standard does not apply to show racers, show homers or the non-flown exhibition classes of those groups of pigeons - see note below on saddled homers.

The working homer is not, as most of our breeds of pigeons are, a bird of pure lineage, genetically speaking, nor is it one that has been bred consistently overall for size or shape, feather or crest, colour or pattern. Being a performer of the highest calibre, the working homer has been bred for one purpose - speed - almost to the exclusion of all other factors and traits. Homing and orienting ability (intelligence) are important requirements, too, but those traits seem to have followed the speed. In other words, fast birds seem to exhibit more intelligence.

That being so, it is completely understandable that in the crossing and inbreeding of the various subspecies of these birds to enhance their speed, certain physical characteristics do not develop consistently as, for example, the tip notch in the turbot, or the huge wattles of the carrier families. These physical features then do not contribute to the specific genetic pool, and seem to take a back seat to the most desired qualities again, the ability to orient, do it quickly, and fly straight toward home. It would be logical to assume that after so many years of breeding for homing instinct, speed and stamina, that a particular physical type would have evolved to dominate or be predominant, as it were, but that is not so.

The working homer is not a bird of one singular body type, and, again, it is completely understandable, given the wide variety of birds bred, and the isolation of their breeding's, in many cases. Some members of the racing fraternity have been breeding from the same basic family of birds for over 50, 60, and even 70 years. Again, this isolation (in the genetic, reproductive sense) tends to guarantee diversity as to shape, size and overall comportment.

#### **Colour & Pattern:**

The following are the generally accepted colour and pattern groups into which working homers are commonly divided. The combination of colour and pattern are almost limitless, especially when genetic factors such as smoky, laced, slate, etc. are taken into consideration. The size and participation in any given show may require that colour classes be combined, but every opportunity should be given to be objective in determining which bird is assigned to any particular colour class. Under no circumstances will a complete class be broken up to form two or three smaller classes, thereby artificially skewing the competition and the award of points and or prizes.

#### **Commonly accepted colour classes:**

Blue, Black, Red, White, Silver, Dun, Yellow, Mealy, AOC (Brown, Khaki, Opal, Indigo, etc.

#### **Commonly accepted pattern classes:**

Solid, self, barred, checkered, pied splashed, grizzled spangled, mottle tortoiseshell, laced, saddle, exotic unknown.

In the solid self - coloured classes, the bird must have no odd coloured feathering anywhere on the body proper. There may be a transition to a lighter shade of feathering under the wing, tail and around the vent area, however, this should be a gradual change enhancing natural colouring, and should not be visible directly from above or to either side of the bird.

\*Although this standard can apply generally, see the separate NPA standard for specific judging criteria for the saddled homer. The body of the saddled homer must be of a uniform colour (normally

white throughout) with no odd coloured feathering, except in the saddled portions of the back and wings.

### **Judging and Specific Points:**

#### **Traits and Values:**

Each part of the bird adds to the whole being of the working homer, and is quantifiable in terms of its uniqueness. All parts of a pigeon should constitute a sense of balance and harmony – an individual of perfect symmetry. Judges must take care in not overstating the quality of any trait by assessing a point value that is too high, when compared to other birds being judged in a particular class. Honest, objective point assessments can be used as gauges by exhibitors to determine how well their breeding programs and management efforts are working. The number of points listed is the maximum for any trait – the judge should not feel compelled to assess the maximum if the bird being evaluated is not the absolute best of the best. The perfect bird would then get a score of 100.

#### **General Impressions & Overall Appearance: (up to 20 points)**

Regardless of colour or pattern class, flown or non - flown background, the working homer should immediately give one the impression of an athlete primed for competition. It should be alert and aware of its surroundings. The bird should exhibit vigour, strength, intelligence, a calm demeanour and confidence. Due primarily to their genetic diversity, working homers tend to vary in length and size, however, the bird must be proportional, appear balanced, and the body must be smooth, with no apparent bulges or lumps.

#### **Overall Shape & Size: (up to 15 points)**

The working homer's size will vary from one family of birds to another, however, in general, the bird should be of medium size, with developed cocks weighing approximately 434 to 518 grams (15 1/2 to 18 1/2 ounces), and developed hens weighing approximately 392 to 462 grams (14 to 16 1/2 ounces). The body must be oval shaped, flattened on top, but smooth all over, and well filled out. It should not be too deep below, and should smoothly taper back to the stern and tail.

#### **Skeleton, Keel & Vents: (up to 20 points)**

The entire skeleton should exhibit a feeling of balance, and its structure should be strong and firm, medium in weight, proportional to the pigeon, and strongly resistant to any pressure of the fingers at any point. There should be no obvious signs of irregularity, such as lumps and deposits characteristic of older birds with arthritis. Bones of the wings and legs should be straight. The keel should be straight and strong, of medium depth and length, in proportion to the size of the pigeon. It should slope gradually upward from its deepest point to its rear extremity, forming a smooth unbroken line to the touch along its length, with no suggestion of rising to the extent that it narrows down or pinches the abdominal cavity. It should almost form a union with the vent bones. The vent bones should be strong, resistant to the fingers when pressed in any direction. They should be close together at their lowest points, and close but not touching the end of the keel.

#### **Breast & Muscle: (up to 10 points)**

The breast is the most obvious show of strength in the bird and should be strong throughout, firm, and amply broad in proportion to the size of the pigeon, setting the legs well apart. It should be slightly curved, especially as it descends, without any useless weight or puffiness. It should be thickly and smoothly covered with fine, silky feathers. The muscles should exhibit a sense of strength, being firm and well developed, particularly those of the back and the chest.

#### **Feathering: (up to 10 points)**

In general, the entire feather surface should be even and smooth, with a high sheen throughout. There should be no evidence of moulting. It should overall be dense, thick, firm and soft. There should be an added, iridescent lustre, clearly visible along the length of the neck and its hackles. The feather should cover evenly, with a feel of silkiness, free from roughness of any kind.

**Head, Face, Eye, Beak & Neck: (up to 10 points)**

The head and neck should indicate strength. The head should be round and sit smoothly on the neck, with no visible bulges at the ears. The eye should attract with its fullness, richness, clarity and fiery glance of intelligence, and should be placed in the head with the centre of the pigmentation of the eyes should be of the same rich, clear colour. The iris and pupil should be unbroken and very responsive to changes in light. The forehead should make a clean transition to the face in younger birds and hens, but will naturally take on a broken line as the bird ages and the cere develops, especially in cocks. The cere should be clean, white, almost powdery looking, and should not cover the mandible or be of such size as to obstruct straight on vision. The beak should be dark in dark coloured birds and somewhat pink in lighter coloured specimens, but always matching the colour of the toenails. The beak should close smoothly together, with no sign of overgrowth, crossed tip or other obvious defect. The tongue must not protrude. The neck should be proportional, of medium length and taper smoothly and roundly to the chest and back.

**Back & Rump: (up to 5 points)**

The back should be broad, strong and smooth, the muscles readily felt with the thumbs, firm and resistant, with minimal pressure. It should be rather flat, forming one plane to the tail. The rump should be firm and smooth. Beginning broad, it should run well back, tapering into the tail. Both rump and back should be covered with fine, silky soft feathers, the feathers of the rump covering the quills of the tail tightly and running well back, both over and under the tail, providing a cushion both above and below.

**Tail: (up to 5 points)**

The tail should be of medium length, extending approximately 18mm (3/4") to not more than 25mm (1") beyond the tips of the outermost primaries of the wings. The quills should be finely textured, strong and free from fret or other defects. At rest, the tail should fold evenly and closely together, giving the impression of one feather.

**Wings: (up to 5 points)**

The entire wing should be abundantly dressed with fine, silky smooth feathers, the surface of which appear and feel like a piece of fine velvet. When spread out by hand the wing should feel soft, as though the pigeon had laid it there, with no fear or tendency to "snap" it back. The wings should be proportional with the size of the pigeon, when it is spread, the primary and secondary flights should fit well together, forming an even overlap to make one unbroken, smooth air foil, without an exaggerated break between the feathers. All quills should present a fine texture. The primaries and secondary's should be wide to medium wide in the web, clean and free from fret marks, pin holes or other imperfections either genetic or parasitic in origin. At the butt, the wing should be strong and muscular thick, without exaggeration to any degree.