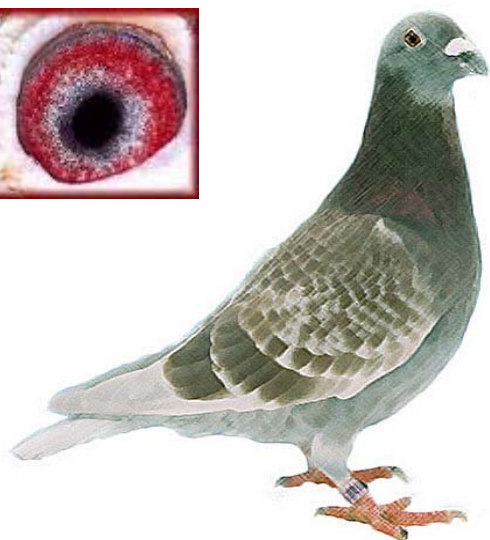
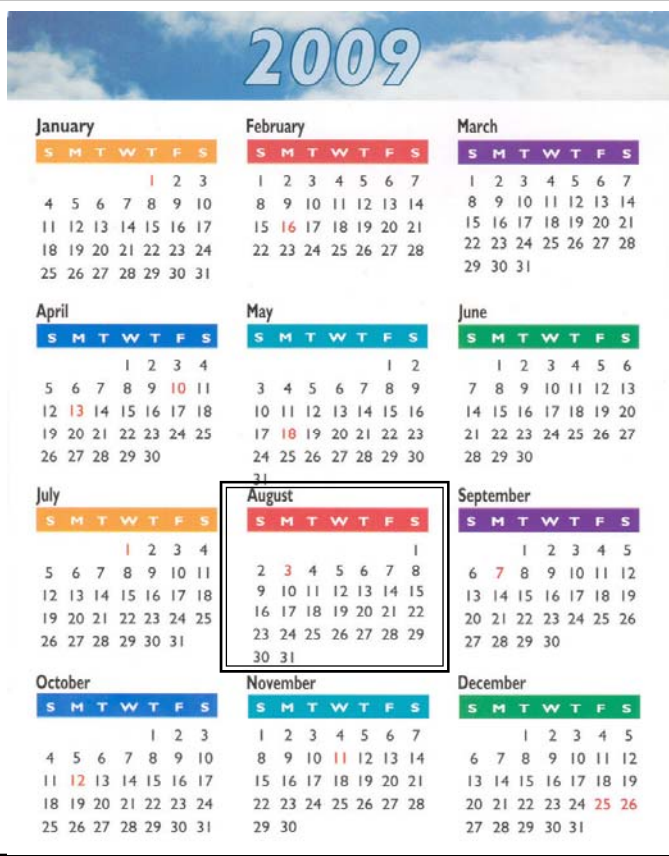


MONTH BY MONTH with Chris



Champion "Tracey's Red" winner of the N.W.C.C. Hall of Fame and over £5,000 in his racing career, for Chris Knowles of Woodley, Stockport.



August : Augustus Caesar's month

Augustus Caesar clarified and completed the calendar reform of Julius Caesar. In the process, he renamed this month after himself.

August a month of important decisions! It is important that you take time to consider, that the youngster that you are racing (assuming that you **are** doing so), are your old bird race team of the next two to five years or so. The decisions of which birds to stop at what juncture and for what reasons, can have a great bearing on the old birds seasons to come. As I have said in previous months, it is not essential to race Ybs for them to become future champions but when you do race them, the decisions you make about them can be just as critical as a decision not to race them. My principle is a simple one, if a youngster is not 100% fit and not 100% healthy, then it stays at home. In a similar way, when it comes to the National event which for me in 2009 will be from 354 miles and across the English Channel, then if the breeding is not suited to such a race, then I don't send it. Even for those who meet all the above criterion, there is usually a significant loss factor. You could say, is it fair to send them so far? Perhaps not but such challenges are part of the lure of this sport. However, common sense has a role to play and with this in mind, I believe that it is sensible to send only a modest number. No prize even at the highest level is worth such sacrifice.

My youngsters for 2009 had their first race from 132 miles on 8 August and have since raced from 152 miles, again from 132 miles and then 188 miles on the south coast of England. I am now entering the window which for me is the whole focus of my YB season. My next race will be 199 miles with the Lancashire Social Circle and three days later the NFC YB National from 354 miles. I intend to cease racing on 12th September with a local club race from 152 miles and perhaps a 2 Bird Open event, depending on the weather forecast.

My team have flown as well as I hoped for to date, with 3rd, 2nd, 5th and 2nd being the positions of my first arrivals in the respective club races and 4th, 2nd, 14th and 6th respectively in my Section of the Federation with my best Open Federation position being 7th from 2,949 birds. The race velocities have been all on the faster side, ranging from 1500 y.p.m. To 1800 y.p.m. which are hardly ideal preparation for the birds which will face 354 miles and on a day that could well provide a head wind. With this in mind it will be essential to chose candidates that have been consistent in their prep. races and training and are also in excellent feather condition, preferably having cast only one primary flight. The feeding on the approach to this race will see an increase in the maize and fat content of their diet.

When fed youngsters require energy and moisture from the body during the digestion process. If the content of their diet is too heavy, it can weaken the pigeon and provide an opportunity for the wrong intestinal bacteria to prosper and rapidly take over. Once this happens then it is almost certain that disaster will follow. The diet content should be as light as possible with a fat content of around 7% to 8% which is good for racing up to about 200 miles. Beyond this distance it is necessary to increase the maize and fat content with appropriate seeds. The conversion of fat to energy makes moisture available to the pigeon's body. A mixture with a higher in fat content ensures that the pigeons will arrive home less thirsty at the end of the race. Feed at the start of the week needs to be a little less and at the end of the week give them more. The day before basketing is most important and they should get all they want. Pigeons that eat a lot on shipping day, as a general rule, are not the first in the clock on race day. When they only spend one night in the basket their crops should be empty, when they are spending two planned nights in the baskets, then they can have some feed in their crops up to a maximum of half full.



The picture above shows a young blue cock from the race team, which has been managed under controlled light conditions (similar to traditional "Darkness") the red in the picture below is moulting under natural conditions and the close up blue is another controlled light pigeon. Photos taken end of August 09



It is easy to see the vast difference on the body moul and the wing moul even more so !



Old birds moulting: With all the focus and attention on the racing of old birds at this point of the season, it is easy to overlook the importance of the moult for your old birds both racers and stock. This is the beginning of the preparation period for racing 2010 and it's associated breeding programme. My aim at this time of the year is make as many natural products available to my old birds as possible. Green foods are invaluable and cheap to buy or grow and provide the invaluable chlorophyll missing from dry seed diets fed to racers. Another valuable yet cheap source of goodness is via herbal teas.

Cleanses the blood - Burdock Root

Stimulates the liver Helps to regulate blood sugar Improve appetite - Fennel

Relieves stomach cramps Cleanses the blood - Nettle

High in vitamins A and C Improves liver and kidney functions Extremely high in vitamin C - Rosehip

Of the above herbals, it is only Burdock that I buy in root form from a health shop, the others are herbal tea bags. To make the tea I simply use a 1 pint pyrex glass measuring jug and add two of each tea bag and one heaped desert spoon of burdock root in a tied garlic bag the small mesh ones that you buy garlic in. I drop these into 1 pint of boiled water and allow to infuse, covering the top with a small plate for 10 mins. I then add the contents to a gallon of drinking water. This produces a very good herbal tea for the cost of a few pence per administration. Combined with regular baths and rest, these natural products will help you pigeons to keep in super health during their moult when supported by a well balanced diet fed in sensible quantities.



Pigeons clearly know who can be trusted and who can't ! There is no substitute for mutual trust !

**Good friends are like stars.....
You don't always see them,
But you know they are always there.**

Until next month, Enjoy your pigeons! **Chris K**