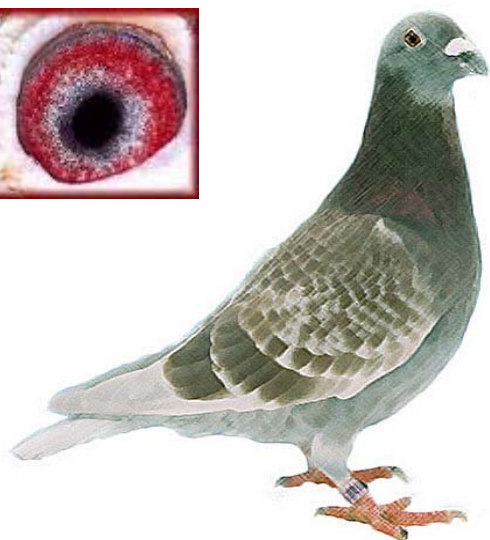


MONTH BY MONTH with Chris



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.

2009

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March -- Mars' month

Martius (*latin*) "of Mars" has always had 31 days. Mars is the Roman god of war. He is identified with the Greek god Ares. March was the original beginning of the year, and the time for the resumption of war.

Without doubt, this is the month in which we see things start to unfold in terms of the racing season. Most fanciers have either have weaned or will be weaning their Y.B. team, the widowhood flyers will commence the process of fitness build up, some will begin training, others will be pairing some natural racers etc. etc. Perhaps one of the most significant events will be the change to British summer time with the clocks moving forward an hour on **Sunday 29 March 01:00 GMT**. For the fanciers who are out at work during the day, this is where the first hope of daily or twice daily exercise emerges.

The first weekend of March is one that I look forward to, as it brings with it the Spring gathering of the Lancashire Social Circle over at Southport. The 2009 gathering like the years before it, was no exception, once again it was a superb social weekend and dinner where friendship is king and tradition is the medium which provides a "second to none" environment. Over one hundred fanciers gathered from all corners of the U.K. And a great time was shared by those present. It is somewhat ironic, when you look at the growing popularity and support for these special gatherings, as there is no question about the visible decline that we are seeing within our sport in general.

The daylight hours are noticeably lengthening and the activity amongst the wild birds is on the up. Some mornings even provide a short rehearsal for the "Dawn Chorus" and the good weather days see reasonable light levels extend beyond six o'clock. The temperatures are still a little hostile for pigeon racing and the humidity still relatively high but these aspects are improving gradually.

The Sun Rise & Sun Set times for March 2009 in my area.

Day	RiseTime	SetTime	Length Of Day
1/3/2009	6.939	17.820	10.881 Hrs
7/3/2009	6.731	18.003	11.289 Hrs
14/3/2009	6.444	18.212	11.769 Hrs
21/3/2009	6.170	18.419	12.249 Hrs
28/3/2009	5.895	18.624	12.729 Hrs

I have taken a few photos as promised in the Feb. article of the weaning of my YBs, to show the system and crates that I use for the purpose. It is not essential to do this but I believe there are benefits to be gained.



One of my weaning crates which also doubles as a quarantine crate, during the remainder of the year.



Another weaning crate from which I remove the temp. blue front to create a crate which when turned around, provides weekly refresher training for drinking with drinker hung on the back side.

The two crates will hold about 30 youngsters, which remain in the crates for six or seven days before being moved to their YB section. The crates sit in the aviary cages during the day and are moved to the loft corridor at about 5.00 p.m. each evening. The crates stay in the trap cages even when pigeons are out to exercise and I find that the youngsters are very quick to get out into the cages as soon as they are given access. This year it was within 24 Hrs. of being placed into their section.



Here you can see the youngsters eating from the home made hopper, which is alternated between crates. Two drinkers when hopper removed.



Here the youngsters have just moved into the section to which they will race.

Once the youngsters have gained the confidence of flying up into the cage, a bath can be made available at regular intervals without exposure to any hawk attacks. It is also an excellent supply of the essential sun's rays from the time I remove the darkness to roosting time, as this loft is facing South. The hours I am using this season for darkening is 17.00 Hrs to 09.00 Hrs. which I will maintain until 21st June.

Back to the old birds and they are just beginning their exercise regime prior to racing. At the moment they are only out once per day but I will increase this to twice per as the daylight hours increase and the temperatures begin to rise. All racers have been on a diet of 100% barley prior to exercise commencing and I have ensured that they have developed appetite to ensure control from the onset. Their feed content will increase in fat and carbohydrate content gradually as their fitness grows and also the quantities of feed will be increased in a similar way. As racing approaches I will treat all racers with a product for canker and about two weeks before their first race, I will do the same for cleansing their respiratory tracts and ensure that they are free from ornithosis. Personal experience over many seasons has led me to repeat this protocol and I must admit that I do so without consultation to a vet. I would add, that if I had any concerns I would submit droppings and swabs for analysis.



This photo shows some of my yearling cocks having a good look at what is going on with the youngsters in weaning crates on what they believe is their aviary cage landing .

As you can see, the presence of the crates does not upset the cocks and they are all enjoying the benefits of being outside and enjoying the sun. As you can see from my shadow on the picture, not even me at close range with the camera is a problem to them. At the time of taking this picture, these yearlings were still on a light feed of barley once per day and as you can see, their condition for the time of year is most acceptable. The racers in the next cage along, are only just being parted as they have been allowed to rear a youngster. This is not something that I would do by choice but have done so, as due to circumstances last season these birds were not raced as youngsters, only trained to 60 miles. My reason for allowing them to rear, is in the hope that they will respond to the widow system more readily, as they will be raced hard this season and be subjected to a rigorous process of natural selection via the basket.

I am a little disappointed that we are not able to obtain the columbovac PMV vaccine in the U.K. As it is available via Holland/Belgium and so I will use the nobilis which I have used on the odd occasion in the past. If you intend to use this vaccine it is worth noting the following;

Inactivated vaccine containing Pigeon Paramyxio Virus-1 (PPMV-1), antigen strain P201, for the active immunisation of pigeons against clinical signs caused by a virulent PPMV-1 infection. The vaccine has been shown to reduce virus excretion after challenge significantly. Birds can be vaccinated from five weeks of age. Because it takes 4 weeks to obtain protective immunity, the initial vaccination should preferably take place at 6 weeks before being entered in races or exhibitions, and before pairing up.

The above is an extract of the marketing data used with this vaccine and is worthy of note as it differs from that associated with the columbovac. If you have not vaccinated before pairing, your birds should in my opinion still have a level of immunity from their previous vaccination which was obviously within the 12 month time frame for which vaccine is reputed to provide protection. In reality is probably a period greater than that advised.

Feeding for the season to come:

Winter time is the time of year when I do a lot of reading and checking about the latest developments and knowledge gained in the feeding of pigeons for differing types of racing. There is research being carried out all the time at various university locations and trials such as pigeons being flown in wind tunnels to measure energy usage and requirements, are nowadays common and the information which results is most valuable. A simple example being the identification of the grains which a pigeon can most readily convert into energy or shall we say most user friendly to the pigeon as fuel. These are corn or maize as it is known in grain terminology and paddy rice. So in the hope that it may be of interest and possibly helpful to some readers of these articles, I have below included some details on an update sprint mix and a long distance mix from the continent. Have a close look at the variance in carbohydrates and fats between the two mixes and you will see how the carbohydrate is used to support maximum flight time at the highest speed via the usage of the glycogen gained via the diet.

Sprint mixture:



Composition:

- 16% Marano maize
- 15% Cribs maize
- 4% Pigeon wheat
- 5% Feed barley
- 15% Milo corn
- 15% White Dari
- 3% Pealed oats
- 8% Paddy rice
- 5% Rice
- 5% Millet yellow
- 1% Vetches
- 1% Mung beans
- 3% Toasted soybeans
- 2% Maple peas
- 4% Green peas

Contents:

Raw protein	11,4%
Raw fat	3,8%
Carbohydrates	66,1%
Raw fibre	3,6%
Kcal	3216
Omega ratio	22:1

Long distance mixture:



Composition:

- 5% Marano maize
- 10% French red maize
- 10% Cribs maize
- 5% Pigeon wheat
- 9% Milo corn
- 7% White Dari
- 2% Pealed oats
- 3% Paddy rice
- 5% Safflower
- 2% Sunflower seed
- 3% Linseed / Flax
- 3% Rape seed
- 5% Hemp
- 2% Millet yellow
- 1% Buckwheat
- 3% Vetches
- 1% Mung beans
- 5% Toasted soybeans
- 5% Maple peas
- 10% Green peas
- 3% Yellow peas
- 1% Lintels

Contents:

Raw protein	15,8%
Raw fat	9,3%
Carbohydrates	53,9%
Raw fibre	6,7%
Kcal	3346
Omega ratio	4:1

March is the month when things begin in earnest and it is the right time to think about your feeding and whether you are happy with what you have done before or whether you wish to give some thought to the information that today's technology provides. Whatever your decision maybe, I hope that it brings you the kind of results that you aim for. I do not intend to try to tell readers what is right or wrong but hope that by sharing what may be new information, in part or whole, that it will stimulate thoughts! Most of my pigeon husbandry is based on information gained through various forms of research, including that shared by friends and then tried and tested in my own loft and refined along the way. I have never tried to copy anyone and find most pleasure from trying to develop a principle or process even further where possible. This is one of the reasons that I introduced the aviary cages to my main race loft, resulting from the research relating to the environmental smells of the pigeons loft location and the role that it plays in the end product homing ability. Well that about it for this month, so I will sign off and get this article across the net to **prestigepigeons**.

**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**