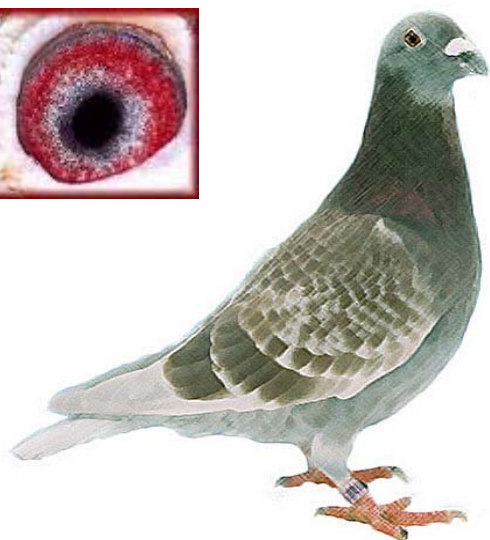
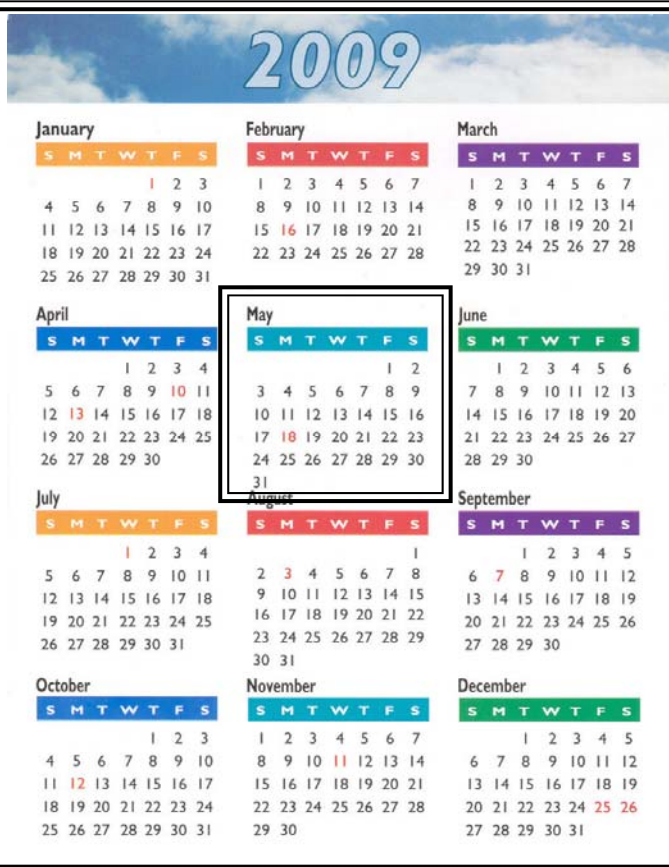


MONTH BY MONTH with Chris



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.



May -- Maia's month

Old French for May is Mai, Old English for May is Maius and the Latin Maius means "of Maia", Latin Maius mensis "month of Maia". Maius has always had 31 days. Maia (meaning "the great one") is the Italic goddess of spring, the daughter of Faunus, and wife of Vulcan.

May to me is the month where I believe I must concentrate on and apply the knowledge that I have acquired over many years, to "**Muscle Management**". In April I referred to "Fitness" which I described as **distribution of oxygen to muscle** tissue during **increased exercise** and condition of body or **mind**

Many informative articles have been published or made available via the Internet, on the subject of how the muscle structure of pigeons is made up and works, along with essential information in relation to the benefits to be gained when your feeding protocol is right. The author that I have found to be excellent in this field and who presents his information in a very user friendly way is Gordon A. Chalmers, DVM. I would strongly recommend that anyone interested and who has not already read his works, should do so.

This month sees the beginning of races from France to my part of the country and is a key time for exercising youngsters to ensure development of their vital organs and to increase their fitness in readiness for the approaching season and along with it, their training.



Youngsters enjoying their daily exercise on one of the days where the weather was O.K. To use the camera.



This picture illustrates well one of the major benefits of the darkness system with Ybs, as you can see the complete body covering of feathers on these youngsters and how they are using their full wings to best advantage during flight.

From the picture above you can see how different birds are using both wings and tails in various ways as they are propelled along by the major pectoral muscles which lie either side of the breast bone and make up from 20-32% of the total weight of the pigeon. The main function of these muscles, is to pull the wing through the powerful down stroke, which propels the pigeon forward and provides lift. Other important flight muscles are the much smaller and more deeply located pectorals, sometimes called the minor pectorals. These small muscles have the important function of raising and rotating the wing during flight and make up only about 4-5% of the weight of the pigeon. Between them, the actions of these two sets of muscles ensure that the wings are raised and lowered. They have on average, a beat of 5.4 times a second at cruising speed for the duration of the flight. In contrast, during the short, explosive phase following strike off, the wings beat on average at the rate of 9.5 times per second. Such information and much more can be found in the articles of Dr. Chalmers.

As I have now reached the point of the season where I consider that my pigeons have reached the fitness level that I was seeking, I no longer use road training unless I have a pigeon or two that have been injured and I am trying to get them back to a fitness level, so that they may be raced. My exercising regime, is twice per day for cocks and hens and once per day for a minimum of one hour for my youngsters. I try to use common sense when the weather is inclement and will tend to adjust my feeding slightly, up or down to combat missed exercising or cold and humid snaps. It is not possible to define such changes as I go with my instinct. The exercising of my old birds is also to a degree done by feel and observation and the length of exercise is determined by the weather, the body language of the pigeons and the point in the week in relation to the last race and the upcoming race. On average each period of exercise is between 30 mins. at the beginning of the week to an hour at the end of the week. I also like to give my pigeons a short fly the morning after channel races to help prevent tying up or cramping in their muscles. I think that confinement after testing races can easily cause problems with the muscles which can then only be rectified with the elapse of time, a luxury that is not so readily available in the race season.



This picture, taken of my old cocks at exercise, shows how the air pressure beneath the wing causes the outer primaries to flex upwards, demonstrating the work required from the major pectorals, even when only at stress free exercise.

Another excellent article which relates totally to all of this, is also from the pen of Dr. Chalmers, "The fuel for flight". The relativity between carbohydrates, fats, glucose, fructose and a number of other substances, is essential information when combined with knowledge of the process inside the pigeon where food is converted into fuel where the liver has a major role to play. It is not practical for me to try to reproduce such information when it is readily available from a professional source but I would urge those who are not au fait with the knowledge, to take the time to read it. Assuming that a fancier has quality pigeons, he is wasting his/her time trying to win in the modern game, without a sound understanding of fuelling the engine and how the engine works.

Coming back to myself, it is my quest in May to ensure that everything within my control is catered for in relation to managing the performance and efficiency of my pigeons in relation to their muscles. I have enjoyed more than my share of success in what I consider to be good competition over the years but I realise that it is harder than ever today because so much valuable information is available to everyone who cares to use it. Perhaps what differentiates between success and failure today, is more about good fanciers and not just good pigeons and finance, as it may have been some years ago?

The season to date has been a series of fast races, which seems to be becoming more of the norm. In recent seasons for the first part of the season. The NFC Fourgeres has been a good example with the winning velocities reaching over 1900 y.p.m. even when the pigeons started off in an east wind. Surely these weather trends must urge fanciers to seek a full understanding of feeding pigeons to achieve maximum muscle efficiency combined with optimum buoyancy, where body weight is not excessive and there is no negative energy balance at the time of basketing. Well I guess you will now fall into one of three categories, you are already aware of the drum that I am beating, you aren't but you will surely make it your business to pursue the information, or you are just not interested in which case I am wasting my time. Lets move on.



In this picture it is possible to see how the cocks are using their 8th, 9th and 10th primaries, especially the mealy pied cock centre picture and the dark grizzle bottom left. This shows the importance of quality feathers to the pigeon when in flight.

I have included the above picture to hopefully illustrate that in addition to all other aspects that we have touched on, it is also important to work towards attaining the best quality feathering possible on your racers. I covered the value of regular bathing in last month's article and I will stress it once again. In addition I supplement the feed for a couple of days per week with natural herbs to enhance the feather quality. This is something that my involvement with the showing of canaries many years ago taught me and is simple but something that I have never forgotten. The one thing that I have failed to mention which I also believe is a must have ingredient at this time of the season, is rest, "**STRESS FREE REST**"! If you have managed to cover all the other bases then the final piece of the jigsaw for me is rest.



Yes you are correct!
The one going in the wrong direction is an aeroplane, heading due west for Manchester airport and has just dropped his landing wheels as you can see.



This is a snap that I took of the beautiful little dove that sits her eggs in the Rhododendron hedge facing my loft, she has built about eight feet from the ground and sits on a very delicate nest of woven twigs. It is a delight to see the comings and goings of her and her mate and serves to remind me daily that we must not ignore mother nature and the wonders that she holds.



There they go!
And here they come!
If that was all there is to it!!!

**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**