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After giving it a lot of thought I have decided to write articles in the future just for www.prestigepigeons.com. None of these article will be re-hashed old articles purely to fill space. They will be my own thoughts on various subjects and as up to the minute as I can possibly get. After 60yrs in the sport I hope to explode a few myths and old wives tales on several pigeon related matters. Most fanciers write articles that they believe their readers want to read about and not necessarily the true facts.

Before we can race pigeons we have to breed them therefore I thought I would make this my first subject. In reality there are only two ways of breeding racing pigeons “**In Breeding**” and “**Cross Breeding**” so that no one gets confused you must remember that “**Line Breeding**” comes under the heading of “**In breeding**” for the purposes of this article.

Many times you will read that the best way of breeding a “**Racing Family**” is to cross breed to in-bred families and thus restore the inbred vigour. This is all very well in theory and if anyone can get me two inbred performance families I will try them. The word “Family” is a very much over used word.

The top known racing fanciers both here and abroad have collections of pigeons and not families and this has always been the same going back as far as the late1800's. Think about it for a minute, if these so called top families had the best pigeons why do the owners of them feverishly go in search of other pigeons to buy or exchange youngsters all over the place. I am not referring to just a few but this includes all the top names whether in Belgium, Holland etc.

There are no “**Super Families**” that breed just winners they do not exist. There are big collections of pigeons that are all crossbred who throw up the odd “**Super Star**” and also a lot of rubbish but of course we never hear about the latter it is only the “Star” that is mentioned.

Now back to our own lofts and practical methods. If you either own, buy or can borrow a good old performance cock then he is the pigeon to have. You then pair him to several hens you will need a small compartment for this and of course feeders to rear the youngsters.

When you have these in your loft pair half brothers and sisters together and you are well on your way and can start testing them. This should give you a good basis to start with and set up your own winning family. Then you can bring in various crosses in to these moderately inbred pigeons and should get some good pigeons showing up. Always lean towards performance rather than fancy names and pedigrees and always test the progeny this has worked for me.

Another thing you must remember is the name of the sport is “**Pigeon Racings**” and we do need basic speed in our pigeons even on my own preferred speciality and that is distance. Pigeons that come home hours after the result is finished but are hard to lose are the most expensive of all; they are the ones that will lose you a fortune.

My best yearling long distance cock of 2008 is bred from “**Barcelona Prince**” x “**Theelan**” crossed with an “**Engels**” fast middle distance hen. He won 1st club, 1st 3.Bird, 1st Federation 511mls being the only bird on the day. Then two weeks later was 12th section J, 135th open National Flying Club with both races being from Saintes making it 1,022 miles in two weeks and he is only a yearling. I have had a lot of success with this type of cross that ahs bred into the pigeons plenty of stamina and speed. This cock is called “**Ballon**” because he came back early in the season blown up like a balloon and I had to let the air out of him.

One of my all time great racers is “**Snake**” a tremendous racer and now breeder. He is again a long distance and speed from “**Willie Thas**” good middle distance speed and stamina from the line of “**Het Grizzelhen**”. She was raced twice over 400mls as a young bird winning 13th National Bourges plus “**Ace Pigeon**”. These pigeons crossed have won from 580mls Bergerac and 687mls Tarbes.

I have had most success in National racing over the years with crossing pigeons but having said that I do like to breed back to the best performers and keep them for stock. Another thing that has done well for me is to keep a few late bred from my best cock of any given year when he is paired the end of the season with a good stock hen. I also like to keep the late bred full sisters of the first ones clocked in the young bird National races, this has worked especially well over the years.



Now for a few do's and don'ts.

Do not be side tracked by eye sign on the experts who preach it. I have seen them all come and go and am still waiting for one of them to win something worth winning.

If you are buying a granddaughter of a special cock make sure it is not bred from his direct daughter, always from a son. A daughter from a daughter does not have any of the cock left as it inherits her chromosome from her sire not grandsire.

Do not be taken in by all the products and super elixirs you see at every show, they do not work and the best you can say is that they do no harm. Nothing you give to a pigeon no matter how much it costs will make a bad pigeon into a good pigeon but it could work the other way, leave well alone.

Lastly remember that breeding top performance pigeons is not an exact science, if it were the case the millionaire fanciers would own all the best and win every National race and we all know that it does not work like that. The Champion is an accident of genes and can with all well bred pigeons turn up at any time or not as the case may be. By breeding from Champion pigeons we cut the odds down a bit and this is all we can do.

As an after thought for anyone who likes reading I suggest you read "The Best of Ad Schaerlackens" a real Champion who tells it like it is. He debunks a lot of old fashioned theories and practises and is a very good read by a Champion who was and still is so good that they asked him not to pool and then not to race. This was because the other so-called Champions could not live with him. To be continued.