

## Preparation for Early Breeding by Geoff Kirkland



**An old picture of me when I had dark hair, holding “Tony’s Boy”,  
a 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> National Winner.**

This is the time of year when all round fanciers get ready for pairing up the stock and racers. By all round, I mean fanciers who race on all distances from short to long and also want to be competitive with darkness youngsters.

It is not for me to wait all year for one or two races on long distances. I like to have a go at them all, but I do respect the people who specialize in the marathon miles.

Remember one thing when you look at these long distance results always compare like with like, for instance, Tarbes to the Southern area is only like Saintes to our lofts and at Tarbes we fly further than they fly at Barcelona, so do not get carried away with the names of famous race points, it is the distance that counts but of course we cannot all fly in the same back yard and we have to accept this when we enter the races.

I shall be putting the lights on the stock birds until 10:00 o'clock at night to help with the breeding preparation. The racers are just the opposite and do not have any lights on if you do this with the racers they will not have good wings for the longer races.



**A view of two of my lofts. The small wooden one warms up quicker than the Brick early in the Season... Later on there is no difference.**

The feeding at this time is still a good moulting mix with some chicken lager pellets. Pay a bit extra and get good quality ones, they contain all the vitamins that are needed and are also plenty of calcium which is good for the hens. The only things they have been having in the water is my own brew of onion, leek and garlic with Sedochol or Vior about twice a week.

To make this brew you must have a large container with a lid, tow or three gallon is ideal. Chop one garlic bulb, one large onion and one leek roughly and fill the container with water and leave for a few days and then you can use it. As you take the water out for the drinkers fill the container up and it is ready for the next day. In winter I use this for about two weeks and then do a fresh batch. They have this every day and what ever else I need I just add to it.

The condition and fall of the down feathers is excellent and it costs almost nothing to make. I shall use it during the breeding and racing season as well. These early youngsters will be weaned at about 28 days, a week later than spring or summer ones and will be put on the darkness, mid March, and stay on until mid June. Over the years I have had many good pigeons from these proving that the darkness is not a problem in later life.



**The "25", 1<sup>st</sup> Sect, 7<sup>th</sup> Open Tours National M.N.F.C. An early winter youngster. This pattern has emerged over the years. Early youngsters and all on the darkness.**

In practice what I do during the rearing is when the youngsters are about 16 days old or when the cock starts to look at the hen again I remove the hen and leave the cock to rear the youngsters. You will not be able to move them all at once because the pairs will be at different stages of rearing as they do not all go down on the eggs on the same day, this only happens in books and not in reality. After all the cocks have finished rearing the hens are away and the youngsters parted, the cock stay like this for a while and have a rest.

The reason the hens are taken away is so that they do not lay the second round of eggs and carry on sitting as this would trigger the moult to start. During the first separation period the cocks will soon recover and start to look really well.



**“Pest”, twice 1st National. A winter youngster.**

We now have our team of widowers in nice condition and their hens will also be raring to go again and this is where we differ from most widowhood fanciers. In late February or even March, some years we re-pair all of them, they will all go down nice and even because they all know what is going on. We then let them rear again both of the youngsters in the second nest. In other words, they rear two rounds of youngsters before they go on widowhood. They are treated exactly the same as the first nest with hens removed at about 16 days or so and the cocks left to rear the youngsters, the only difference being that this time they are now on widowhood.

I have tried all ways of preparing the cocks for racing over the years and this is definitely the best way. I have no idea why it works so well but it does.

Many years ago I read an article by “Wal Sootjeens” and this is the way that he does things, with a few small variations.



**“The Snake” Grizzle Cock (THAS), won over £8,500 racing. He is the sire and grandsire of winners. He is also another youngster.**

If you are concerned about the moult for the extreme distance cocks then close their case up and put your few “specials” in the young bird loft for a few weeks and then put them back in after the others have reared. In practice I have found that we have no problem with the moult and they are just one feather farther on in the wing and we race them from 81 miles out to 687 miles.

As I said earlier I have no specific explanation why it works so well but no other way is as successful for me, try it and I think you will be pleasantly surprised.