

Racing 2009 by Geoff Kirkland



Waiting for the first race in 2009 with my team of cat deterrents.

As I sit writing this article and looking out of the window at the dark skies and pouring rain, I think what a fitting end to the worst old bird season I have ever had ever since I have had pigeons. I just couldn't seem to do a thing right!

The season started fine with the first race we competed in on the pace and just beaten by a few seconds. Second race won easily and in the first few in the Fed. Then we started on all those very fast tail wind races with velocities in the 2000 yards a minute. I have never liked these type of races, mainly because my feeding methods and type of pigeon are geared towards 300 miles plus on a flying day. Another problem with these fast races, week after week, was that the pigeons did not get enough time on the wing to condition them for the longer distances. This proved to be the case when they did have to fly home against the wind with a lot of empty perches and long faces.

We have also had a lot of very wet races and this is also fatal for the form. One spin off from this is that I am going to install heating panels in my brick loft to keep them dry more than anything. I shall use the radiant heat one from Frank Bristow, as these are the most efficient.

My Widowhood cocks did not look bad with nothing obviously wrong but they did not exercise with their usual zest and I put this down to the weather more than anything. I kept on with my usual routine of feeding and exercise and the birds were coming on race days with several in a few minutes but no matter what I did I could not get them to improve, always 10-15 minutes of the pace. My first reaction was that everyone, even some of the big name flyers were having a strange season and I had several of them ring me up to ask what I thought. The hens did not seem to be bothered by whatever was affecting the cocks and these continued to win a few prizes.



"Lady Isobel", 1st Sect, 4th Open National Bergerac 580 miles.

The next thing I thought was that a team of pigeons that had been winning at the top level for years does not suddenly turn into a team of bad ones and decided a radical re-think was in order. On closer examination I found that most of the cocks had not cast the first slight and still had a lot of old winter down. The reason for this still did not dawn on me and I put the cocks on a course of team and a "sedochol" type product and this did improve the fall of the down. With hindsight I should have done this sooner but we all make mistakes.

It was during this period when I was catching the cocks and examining them on a regular basis that I found out at last what was wrong with them. I had one particular blue white flighted cock who has never liked being caught and it was this cock who when I was trying to catch him on the grid floor kept on running away from me and got very distressed. When I picked him up, he was gasping for breath with his beak wide open and could not fly into base, so much so that I thought something was seriously wrong with him and put him in the outside aviary. It was then, after a bit of thought, I came to realise what was wrong with them. They had "Chlamydia", which causes severe ornithosis and was described to me like someone with bad asthma trying to run up hill. In other words they could not breathe!

The cure for this was a course of "Amoxylin" and "Clavularic Acid", trade name "SYNULOX". Two drops direct into the beak for five days but after only two days I could see the difference. You need to get this from the vet or you can get an even better BIFS product from Dr.Vandersanden.

The cocks started now to exercise like young birds going off and coming back for 15-20 minutes at a time but by now the season was over. After the treatment I times a good one from Tarbes 687 miles and the blue white flighted cock who could not breathe flew over 13 hours from Saintes on the day. Incidentally after the course of Amoxylin, I started to use BIFS Vior and I think this is an excellent product which has the bonus of preventing fungal problems.

Well, as I said at the start of the article it was a bad season for me but at least I have learned a few things that I shall not repeat in the future. The moral of this sorry tale is even if you have won everything there is to win in pigeons racing, including best average in all races, National Flying Club and best average in Midland National, several times, you can still have a bad season even with a life times experience. With hindsight I can see that they were showing classic symptoms of the problem, especially not casting the old winter down and the result "Chlamydia" is almost always picked up in the baskets on contact with other pigeons.

Federation crates should be disinfected after every race but of course they do not do this or none that I have ever known do. It is mostly club crates which are the problem, National crates do not get used as much and have a chance to keep cleaner.

Young Birds.



The young birds are doing quite well. I am at about 50 miles with the training and I have some nice prospects in them. After the problems I had with the old birds, I gave the youngsters 5 days of "doxycyclin" and then a probiotic and vitamins. This to make sure they had clear heads as this is the biggest problem with youngsters. Like everyone I have had a few difficult training tosses with some of them taking all day but they seem to have learned from it and are coming well. After one of these tosses I did have a few of them hold corn and wet droppings caused by the stress I think. I cured these with "Parastop", which is "Trimethaprim" this has a good response for "adeno Coli" which is almost always what it is. They are on National Young bird with maize and I shall keep them on this . I shall not do a lot of club racing early on but will be training my self up to 100 miles so far.

The nest bowls have just been put in the young bird loft as I want as many as possible to pair up, I can usually get them to take to the pat eggs and these are the young hens that I shall use in the classics.

Om the thorny subject of medication. I have tried all ways, Herbal products and the none at all approach. I think the best way is to medicate for "ornithosis" head problems etc... one week and every other week a cure for canker. This only during the young bird training and racing period.

It is not such a lot of medication because we are only racing a few weeks. The rest of the year they only have natural products, Naturatine, Garlic, Tea etc.. even vegetable juice from the kitchen is also good. Another good plan for special races is to give "Doxycyclin" on the day before the are basketed. I am only talking about the youngsters here. To conclude, youngsters need not be hammered down the road every day and go in every available young bird race.

Good pigeons are born not made and as long as they are well educated without being hurt that is all they need. Over raced darkness youngsters are the reason why they are no good as yearlings. Well that is all for now, I hope you have good young bird racing and above all, enjoy your pigeons.