

THE PIGEON RACING
**BEGINNER'S
HANDBOOK**

**HOW TO SET YOURSELF UP FOR
SUCCESS IN THE SPORT!**



Welcome to the Beginners Handbook to Racing Pigeons!

This age-old sport has attracted thousands of fans and fanciers – it combines the satisfaction of caring and breeding champion animals, with the thrill of winning races!

There is a lot of information and in-depth tips and tricks you need to become a champion in this sport.

However, if you are just starting out, it may get a little confusing and advanced, so this handbook is designed to help you build a good foundation knowledge of pigeon racing and introduce you to this exciting and strategic sport.

The beginners handbook will show you a few of the basics, as well as taking you through one entire year in the lives of your birds, this way you will have a better understanding and vision of what the sport is all about.

After this introduction handbook – the next step is to have a go at building your loft and raising and training your birds.

When you do this – you'll need the next level of information to make sure you are putting everything in place the right way to breed and grow champions!

The essential resources you need for this are:

Pigeon racing is a great sport, hobby and past time and one that you can even involve your entire family in. Remember to keep you and your bird's well being a top priority and most importantly - have fun with it!

This handbook is designed to be read chapter by chapter and will guide you through the basics, so welcome to this great sport and enjoy the handbook!

The Ultimate Beginners Handbook Contents

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Raising pigeons is a great hobby, and when pigeons get the care they need and deserve, they are a wonderful pass-time. It is a hobby

that gives hours of inexpensive fun and pleasure!

In it's long past as a companion bird, the racing pigeon was originally the bird of kings, princes, and noblemen. In fact it was originally against the law for a common man to own pigeons!

Pigeons were originally bred to “home” in order to carry messages long distances, mainly for military purposes. The Egyptians and Persians were known to use trained pigeons to deliver important messages, as were the ancient Chinese who used them as a form of postal service.

This of course led to the competitive sport of pigeon racing, where the speed and stamina of the birds are tested over distances of 100 to 1000 kilometers.

There are now racing pigeon clubs in many countries around the world, but it is said to have originated in Belgium, where it is the National sport.

Several times each week, clubs in Belgium send hundreds of thousands of pigeons to race for prizes that can be over \$50,000. The Queen of England even has a loft of pigeons, which she was given as a token of friendship from the King of Belgium.

Racing pigeons in America has also become a popular sport, where trainers and breeders can test the skills of their animals without having to spend huge amounts of money (like horse or dog trainers).

Even so, the prize winnings can be high - one race in America recently paid out nearly \$800,000 in prize money to the top birds!

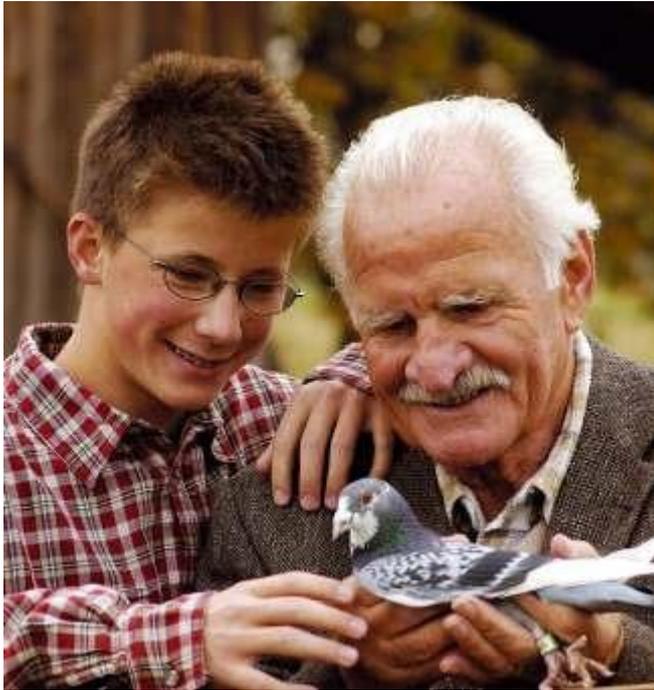
People that keep pigeons have a very big responsibility because they are Ambassadors for the Sport. It takes time and effort to make sure that the loft is clean and well kept.

Notice that we said clean and well kept – and a clean and well kept pigeon loft does not have to be expensive. With the right design and construction materials is can be quite cheap to build top-notch housing for your birds.

The pigeons must also be well trained and they need to be taught “good manners” . As you can imagine, if they are left to fly all over the neighborhood and roost and defecate where they please, neighbors will not be happy.

So as an Ambassador for this great sport, you need to be mindful that a clean and well kept loft keeps the image and reputation of the sport clean, where a dirty and messy loft and untrained birds give a poor reflection on both the birds and the sport.

Pigeon Racing is a sport that goes back over a thousand years – so think of this as you become part of this proud tradition, of creating champions and caring for these wonderful birds.



Pigeon racing is a sport with “ a single starting gate and a thousand finish lines” (from the script for “ Marathon in the sky”) because it basically involves releasing competitors from a single location, and then racing home to their lofts. This can be distances from 100 to over 1,000 kilometers!

Pigeon Racing is not only a sport where you can gain great pride from your champions, it is also a sport where money can be made.

There are regular local and county race meets around the world where you win pots of thousands of dollars. In larger races such as the Royal Pigeon Racing Association the top fanciers win over \$29,000 for a single race.

Pigeon racing is popular around the world and the stakes and prize money show it – the Iron Eagle race in China has a \$500,000 prize pot and the

Chinese Racing Pigeon Association boasts over 300,000 members.

Then there is the ultimate race in South Africa – the “ Sun City Million Dollar Pigeon Race” where over 4,000 birds from 23 countries compete for a share of the \$1.3 Million Dollar pot!

In the USA, there are two main race types – the club race and the one-loft race. In club racing, breeders take their pigeons to a pre-determined area and register and release them – and the birds to travel home the fastest are the winners.

In one-loft racing, breeders send chicks to a host loft where they are all raised together – so on race day when they are released, they all fly back to the same place. This is a better determiner of best breeding and usually has higher prize money and value.

If you have the patience and persistence to breed true champions, you can also make a lot of money by selling your breeders and chicks.

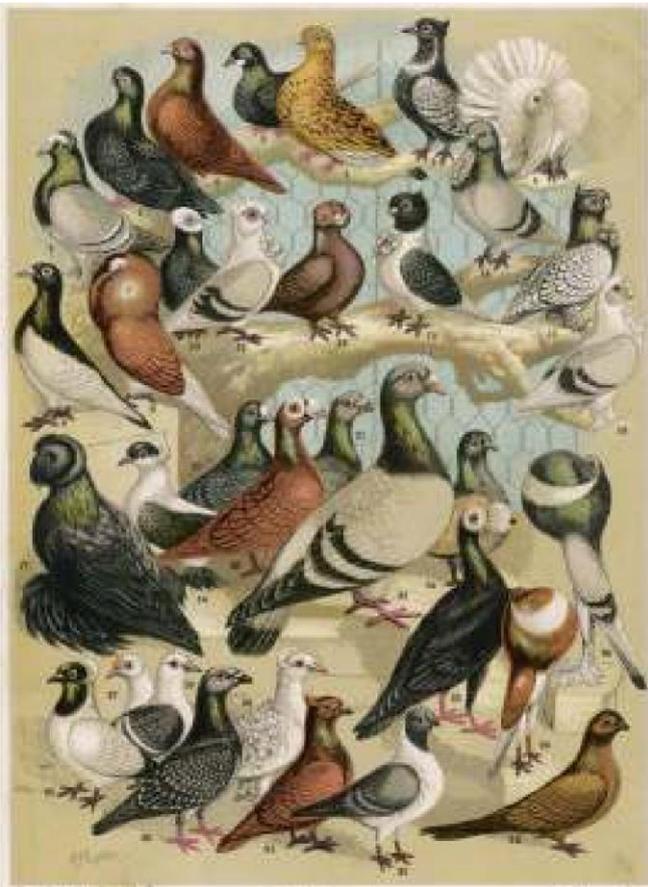
An average racer will sell from \$30-100, but once you get good pedigree and top race results they will rise in value to the thousands of dollars. And when your winners are making \$20,000 in a race, their value really starts to boom!

The Chinese buyers have been setting records – with many birds being purchased for over \$100,000, with a new record being set recently when a Chinese buyer paid \$328,000 for a single bird!



Varieties of Pigeons

There are very many varieties of pigeons – hundreds in fact! Pigeons and doves are both members of the Columbidae family, and most show and racing pigeons are breeds of the domestic pigeon.



There are many breeds of Show Pigeons (bred for looks), Rollers (bred for their acrobatics), and of course Racing Homers which have been bred for speed and a higher level of homing instinct so they are champions in pigeon racing.

Most show pigeons are not let outside to fly. This group includes pigeons such as Fantails, Runts and Pouters. Rollers can be shown and they also can be let out to fly - they get their names by flying high in the air and then rolling back flips down toward the ground.

Racing Homers were bred from a number of other breeds – which were selected for their endurance, speed and homing abilities – a good homer can fly 600 miles in one day!

Other new breeds have come from increased competition in the sport of pigeon racing, including the American Show Racer which has been bred with a very upright posture, a powerful head and very smooth feathers.

With all the breeding and prize money up for grabs, show and racing pigeons can become very valuable birds. In 2012 a Chinese businessman bought a Dutch pigeon for \$328,000 – setting a world record for the most valuable pigeon ever sold!

If you want to learn how the ace lofts bred their champions – champions that sell for \$10,000 or more be sure to check out our [Digital Mentor Pigeon Racing System Program by clicking here.](#)

Pigeon Racing Basics

Whatever kind of pigeons you would like to have, there are three basic essentials that they MUST have:

1. A safe and secure loft that is kept neat and clean and is safe from dogs, cats, mice, rats and people
2. Good food that gives them all the nutrients and vitamins they need.
3. Clean fresh water

This is the basics to keep your pigeons healthy, but as a pigeon racer there is another whole level of understanding that you need to gain to ensure your pigeons are in top racing condition.



And as you have discovered in this book - having champion birds is not only for a great feeling of pride and achievement, the prize money can be in the tens of thousands and the birds themselves



can be worth hundreds of thousands!

If you want to get into the details of champion birds, we recommend you start with The Digital Mentor Program which will teach you the secrets to growing healthy, happy champions that will fly further and faster. It is a system based on the secrets of ace fanciers and their champion lofts, and will help you get the same winning results that they do year after year. [Click here to learn how.](#)

Raising pigeons is rewarding work and you will get out of it what you put into it. If you put little time and effort into your pigeons, then that's exactly what you will get back from them. But if you care for them in the right way, then you will find this is a sport that will bring joy, pleasure, and lasting friendships.



Just as chickens are kept in coops, pigeons are kept in pigeon lofts. And just like chicken coops, pigeon lofts can come in all shapes, sizes and prices.

For some people who making pigeon racing their fulltime income, pigeon lofts can be amazing and very expensive. They will have well-designed structures that are easier to clean and care for, and have excellent ventilation.

For some people this is suitable, especially if pigeon racing is a passion for them, or if they make their living by racing pigeons. Some American fliers make an excess of \$200,000 a year racing and selling pigeons. It is not hard to do considering that first prize may be more than \$80,000!

Some of these lofts are so expensive, that the average person could not afford to buy one for a house, let alone for a pigeon loft!

But don't be discouraged - the average pigeon fancier's loft does not need to be this fancy or large. Actually most pigeon lofts are small and they can be built very cost effectively.

If you would like to learn how to easily build an affordable and attractive aviary, and save \$200, \$500 or even a \$1,000 off the cost of buying one pre-made (the average aviary costs \$700 to buy, with high end aviaries costing over \$2000 or more). Check out this new aviary building ebook , which will save you money and gives you detailed step-by-step plans and designs for constructing aviaries that will last for years to come. You'll find literally everything you need to know about how to build an aviary, by yourself, on the cheap inside this ebook. If you're a serious pigeon fancier I highly recommend it – [Click here to learn how to build your own loft at a fraction of the cost.](#)



Here are some quick tips:

Whether your pigeon loft is small or large, cheap or expensive, it must be well ventilated, dry, free from drafts, well lit and safe. Remember, this is the home for your pigeons. If you want them to come back, you must provide them with safety and nice living conditions. If you do not, they will eventually leave to find a place that does have them.

Make sure that your loft has a good roof. The roof should hang well beyond the walls, because a driving rain will come through any openings that are not covered by the roof. The pigeon loft should be enclosed by at least three sides - four walls are better.

Pigeons are not like robins and other birds that live in trees - they like security. Three or four walls gives them the protection and security from the weather and other animals.

Make sure you face the loft toward the direction of your nicest weather. Most American lofts face either East or South, but this depends on your own local climate.

Pigeons must be familiar with their surroundings before they take off and fly. If they are forced to fly before they know where home is, they will probably become lost. A pigeon loft has a landing board where the pigeons enter and leave, and this landing board allows the pigeons to stand and become familiar with their surroundings. At the end of the landing board should be a flap that covers the traps or “ bobs” . When the birds are inside the loft, the flap should be closed.

Cats would like nothing more than to enter your loft and have a nice lunch and the “ bobs” will not keep cats out. Cats will easily bend the traps, and then not only eat some of your birds but also kill many more through shock and hunting instinct. Just make sure you keep the flap closed when your pigeons are inside.



Some pigeon lofts have a fly cage attached to the loft. This fly cage allows the pigeons to go safely outside and enjoy the fresh air and sunshine. It also gives



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youngsters the opportunity to look at their surroundings and become familiar with their home and location.

Loft Location

A pigeon loft with pigeons that are allowed to fly outside should be out in the open. It should not be covered by trees. The pigeons need to be able to see their surroundings. They also need to be able to see their loft when they are flying. If you get a choice, do not place your loft near wires. Pigeons fliers that have lots of wires around their homes have many problems with broken legs and wings.

Loft Direction

Your pigeon loft should be facing the direction of your most pleasant weather. It should be facing away from the bad weather of winter. For most people, the best direction to face their lofts is to the East or South.

Blocks

The loft should be placed on concrete blocks. If you are building your pigeon loft on a concrete floor, the blocks are not needed. Most fanciers have a wooden floor in their lofts. By placing the loft off the ground, you discourage rats, mice, weasels, skunks, and other animals from living under your loft. Most of these animals only spell trouble for you and your pigeons – and your neighbors would not appreciate them either!

Loft Ventilation

Proper ventilation is essential to the health of your birds, and it doesn't just mean adding a window or two. Windows allow rain and bad weather into the loft, and allow the floor to get wet – which is also not good for your birds.

Proper ventilation must start with ventilators in the top of the roof to allow heat and carbon dioxide out, and vents lower down to allow cool air to be drawn into the loft.

Traps

For those fanciers that intend to allow their birds to fly outside, traps or bobs are a must. Traps mean that once the birds have come into the loft, they cannot leave again.

Pigeons should either be out exercising, or inside

the loft. If they are outside all day, they get into bad habits – so as soon as they are finished flying, they should be called into the loft.

This is for several reasons – firstly because for good racing results you need to train your pigeons to return directly to the loft when they have finished flying. You also don't want your pigeons making a mess of the neighborhood, or mixing with common pigeons where they could pick up diseases and eat bad food.

Train them at an early age to enter the loft as soon as they are finished flying – if they land on your neighbor's house or sit on telephone wires, throw something soft at them, such as a tennis ball. This will teach them that the only place to land is on your own property.

There is of course an exception to the suggestion of throwing tennis balls at your pigeons when they land where you don't want them too. Make sure they know where home is before you do something like this or you may find they fly away and do not return.

Landing Board

The landing board is placed in front of the traps. This is the landing and taking off pad that the birds use as they enter and leave the loft. It should be large enough for the birds to land and take off easily. If it is too small the birds will not be able to enter the loft easily, and they will not be as willing to come into the loft when you call them. It should also be large enough for your youngsters to sit and look at their surroundings.

Aviaries

An aviary or fly cage can be added to your loft. They are particularly helpful when it comes to caring for birds that are always kept in their loft.



The aviary allows the birds to go outside and get some fresh air and sunshine. Some fanciers make the top of the aviary from wood or shingles. This is helpful in keeping droppings from sparrows or starlings out of your loft. These droppings could have some serious diseases that you would not want your pigeons to catch. Other fanciers take the risk and make their aviary top from wire. They feel that the advantage of allowing the pigeons outside in an open top aviary allows rain and sunshine to enter all the parts of the aviary, which

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makes it possible for the birds to take rain and sun baths.

Paint

Paint is a great tool in being a good Ambassador for the sport of racing pigeons. It's amazing how fresh and clean a loft looks after a coat of paint, and there is no excuse for having a sloppy looking loft. It will also remind you to keep the area around the loft cleaned up., which discourages rats, mice, and other pests. Take pride in your loft and pigeons. Take pride yourself. Keep your loft painted!

Locks

No pigeon loft should be without a lock. Over the years, a number of American fanciers have had their lofts vandalized. Their pigeons were either stolen or killed. A lock is not very expensive and is a good investment for every loft.

Perches

There are several types of perches that you can build or buy. They are important parts of your pigeon's lives. This is especially true for youngsters. This is their home inside their home. Once they have selected their perch, they will fight to keep it.

Do not have more birds than perches, or the birds who miss out will be uncomfortable and

have no desire to return home. They will be the first to be lost because they do not have the desire to come back to a loft where they are left out. That perch is very important because it is the magnet that draws pigeons home.

V-Perches

V perches are easy to and cheap to build and cleaning them is very easy, but they do have some drawbacks. On open perches like this it is easy for the birds to soil the pigeons below them if you make them too short. It also makes catching the birds a little more difficult.

Box Perches

Box perches are more difficult to build, and they cost more. They are excellent for controlling pigeons, because the birds cannot jump from one perch to another perch when you want to catch them. It is also harder for them to soil the other birds below with their droppings. Box perches are usually 9" by 9". If they are much larger than that, the pigeons often get their own droppings on their own perches.

Nests

Nests are to old birds as perches are to youngsters. They are a big reason why old birds want to come home. It is their home within a home. Once they select a nest they will fight to keep it. For this very reason, it is very useful to have fronts on your nests. It helps keep other pairs out.

Homing pigeons have nest boxes approximately 1 foot high, 1 foot wide, and 2 feet long. Good nest boxes have fronts that go on or off easily. Since the nests should be cleaned after each round of youngsters, it is helpful to have a good nest front. It makes cleaning the nest easier. A front can also be a big help when it is time to lock up the pairs during the mate selection process at the beginning of the breeding season. Good nest fronts are also helpful in keeping your pairs out of the nests when the breeding season is over.



Feeding Your Pigeons

Pigeons are seed eaters but like all animals they need a balanced diet. Eating just one kind of seed will cause them to become sick and weak.

Many feed dealers have pigeon feeds that are already mixed with a proper selection of grains. If you cannot find anyone that handles pigeon feeds, you could mix whole corn, wheat, milo, and chicken laying pellets together and have a balanced feed mix.

Pigeons also like greens. During the summer, they can get their greens outside while exercising, but during the winter, greens are not always available. If your birds are always kept in the loft, then they will never have any greens unless you provide some for them. Chop a few leaves of lettuce, spinach, or cabbage for them, and occasionally add a sprinkle of salt to add flavor and essential electrolytes.



Make sure you store your feed in a place where it will be protected from bugs, mice and water. Insects will lay their eggs on your feed and when the eggs hatch, your feed will become wormy. Mice will leave their droppings in the feed and spread diseases such as paratyphoid. Wet feed gets moldy and causes other pigeon diseases.

Feed Trough

Pigeons should be fed in or on some kind of feed trough. Could you imagine what would happen to you if you always ate food that fell on the floor? You may not always get ill from this, but sooner or later you would get sick. Pigeon droppings fall on the floor. So, you should not expect your birds to eat their food after it has fallen on the soiled floor either. Feeding from a trough reduces the risk of having your pigeons catch diseases.

If you feed your birds from an uncovered feed trough, remove the trough when the birds are finished eating. This prevents the pigeons from soiling the bottom of the feed tray. Never leave food in the tray when they are finished eating. Pigeons will knock the uneaten seeds on the floor and trample them into their droppings. Know how much your birds eat each day and feed them no more than that amount. Over fed pigeons waste feed, are expensive, difficult to train, and get fat and lazy.

Besides feeding time is one of the most important times of the day. It is a time to get acquainted with your birds. They will walk between your feet while eagerly waiting to be fed. They can be trained to eat from your hand. They will learn to trust you. Feed them in small amounts so that they have to eat all the seeds. If you pour a whole bunch of feed in the trough at one time. They will pick out only what they want to eat and thus not get a balanced diet.

Grit

Pigeons do not have teeth or stomachs. They have gizzards. The gizzards grind up the hard seeds so that the food can be digested in the small intestine. Pigeons need to eat grit. Grit is nothing more than small stones that the gizzard uses to grind up the grain. Your feed dealer probably has some grit. Commercial grit may contain minerals and salt. If you do not have an opportunity to buy commercial grit, you can make some yourself. Take a piece of concrete and break it into pieces about the size of small peas. If it is too large, they will not use it. If it is much smaller than that, the birds will continually be eating grit because the gizzard is breaking it down too quickly. You may add a



little salt to the grit, but do not add too much salt. If you have too much salt in their diets, it will cause them to drink constantly. Oyster shells can be added to the grit. Pigeons use the calcium from the shells to make strong bones and firm eggs. Charcoal bits can also be added. Grit should be kept in a covered trough so the pigeons cannot soil it with their droppings.



Feeding Your Pigeons *(continued)*

Water

Pigeons need fresh water. It should be changed at least once a day. Some fliers add a teaspoon of Clorox bleach to a gallon of water. The bleach does not give the bacteria a chance to multiply so easily. Even if the water looks fresh the next day, it is not. Bacteria is so small that you need a microscope to see it. Just take a little extra time and pour it out and get some fresh water. Water should be changed just before you feed the birds.

Many fanciers keep their waterers off the floor because as the pigeons fly around the loft, their wings stir up dust. The dust may carry bacteria which will contaminate the water. If you put the waterer off the floor, you reduce the amount of dust which may fall into your water.

Wherever you place your waterer, make sure that it is covered. If the birds sit above an uncovered waterer, their droppings will fall directly into the water. If the openings in your waterer are too large, your pigeons will continuously be in the water taking a bath. Waterers can be bought from pigeon supply companies or you can also make your own from a gallon milk jug or a Clorox Jug.

After several weeks, you will notice a slick feeling slime on the bottom of your waterer. This is a microscopic form of algae. This algae also helps trap and hold other forms of bacteria, which might cause an illness in your pigeons. It is very easy to get rid of this slime. Just put a small amount of Clorox bleach in the water and wipe the waterer with a rag. Many top fliers wash their waterer with a disinfectant every day.

Once you start racing...

You need to know what the top racers are feeding their birds. The Digital Mentor System will show you the feeding and nutrition secrets that will get

your birds flying at higher speeds for longer distances.

It doesn't matter if you have the best, most expensive pigeons in the world, if your birds aren't properly fueled they will never fly at their peak physical performance. [Click here to learn more about it.](#)



Sick Pigeons

Pigeons sometimes get sick even in the cleanest lofts. Symptoms of a sick pigeon include constant ruffling of feathers and looking droopy. They may also have watery droppings.

Many different diseases will cause these symptoms. It would be a good idea to remove the sick pigeon and place it in a small pen or cage to help prevent the disease from spreading. Then you can call your local vet or pigeon supply company.

Pigeons also may get lice. They live on the pigeons and in the cracks in the loft and drink the pigeons blood and chew on their feathers. Dusting your birds several times a year with a lice dusting powder will get rid of the lice. A handful of Borax laundry detergent in their bath water also helps remove and prevent lice. Dusting powders and roost paints can be purchased from any pigeon supply house.

To prevent sickness, it is a good idea to have the bottom of your aviary made from wire, which allows the droppings to pass through. Just make sure the wire mesh is small enough so the pigeon's feet do not

fall through too.





Getting Your First Pigeons

Once your loft is completed, you are ready for the best part of all – to get your first pigeons!

You will find many top birds listed for sale in racing pigeon magazines, and in online marketplaces and websites.

Unfortunately, many of them cost more than the beginning fancier can afford.

The best source of good pigeons is from some of your local fliers. Most of these veteran fliers will be happy to help you get started because they know that their sport depends on new fliers.

They will either provide you with some breeders so you can raise your own racers, or else they will get you started with some youngsters that you can settle and fly immediately.

Make sure you let them know that you are going to take good care of the birds and are prepared and

ready with a loft, food and water. Remember that they will want you to be good ambassadors for the sport too!

The only way to attain real longevity in the sport of pigeon racing is to breed your own champions. By mastering the practice of breeding, you'll have the ability to control quality, quantity, and most importantly, performance. Whether you want to establish a solid reputation as a top breeder or you are looking to sell your pigeons and generate huge profits, you need to know all the facts.

The Digital Mentor System takes you through a straightforward, outlined explanation of everything you need to launch your winning team. No more guessing or trial and error. Just powerful methods that are designed to unleash the champions in your lines and set them on a course to non-stop success – [Click here to learn how to breed champion level racing pigeons.](#)





The Pigeon Life Cycle

To help you understand what to expect from your pigeons, we will briefly follow them for one year. Because a year is a long time and many things can and will happen it will be impossible to explain everything, but for this book we'll just explain the basics.

Also, please remember that there are very many ways to keep, raise, and train pigeons. [Click here](#) when you are ready to take your pigeon racing knowledge to the next level.

Let's start at then beginning in Spring...

As the amount of daylight increases in the Spring, hormones inside the pigeons get the birds excited. Cock birds (boy pigeons) will begin to puff up their chests and fan their tails as they chase the hens (girl pigeons) around the loft. The hens also get turned on, so to speak, and get ready to make eggs. By Valentines Day, many fanciers are ready to mate their birds.

Serious racers and fanciers spend many winter nights planning which cocks and hens are to be mated together. When the day comes to mate their pairs together, most fanciers place their planned pairs inside the nest boxes and lock them up. The cock birds might get so excited that they will scalp their hens. To prevent this, it is helpful to place a brick inside one corner of the nest. This allows the hen to stand above the cock and saver her from a possible pecking. The next day, you let them out to feed and stretch.

After they have had a chance to feed and stretch, you lock them up again. After several days, they will begin to pair up. Most become paired up after

just a few days. Some may go as long as two weeks, and there are a few that will never become paired, but fortunately those are few and far between.

Nesting

As soon as the birds are paired, you can place nesting material in the loft. Some fanciers place the material inside the nests. Some place it on the floor and let the birds build their own nests. This practice also helps them exercise and wear off winter fat.

What nesting material do you use? You can use straw, twigs, tobacco stems, or pine needles. Straw is cheap and easy to get, but gets mushy as the squeakers (baby pigeons) get their droppings on it. It is also a good home for mites and lice which live in the hollow stems of the straw.

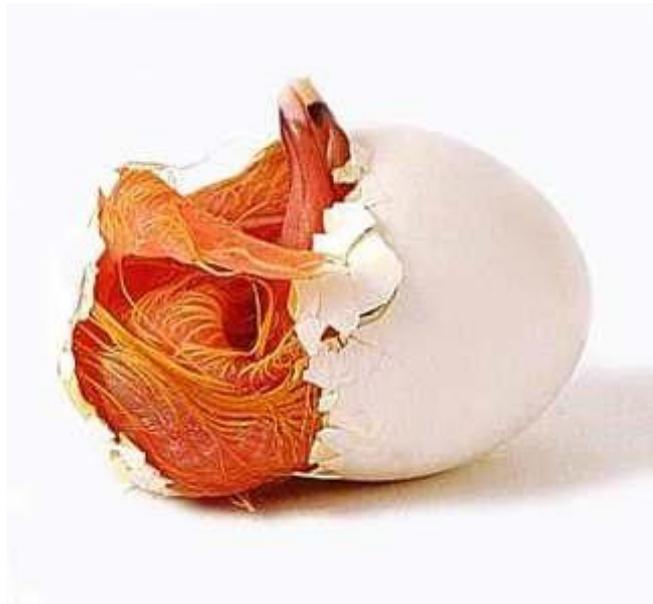
Tobacco stems and pine needles are both great for nests. They both help repel mites and lice and you can get pine needles for free just by raking them up from under a pine tree!

While the birds are building their nest and courting, the cock will eventually get on top of the hen and mate with her. He will also feed her a milky fluid that helps stimulate

her to produce the eggs.

Egg Incubation

After about 10 days from mating, the hen will lay her first egg. If it is not freezing outside, she will probably not sit on it all the time. She will skip a day, and then lay her second egg. Now she is ready to sit tight and incubate both of her eggs.





There are exceptions to every rule, and here is an exception. Remember when we mentioned that it was important to know how much your birds ate? Now, you will notice some extra feed being left in the trough. Here is the exception to the rule about leaving left over feed in the trough. Leave the food! Some hens and cocks sit so tightly on their eggs or squeakers, that they will not go to eat until their

In 5 weeks, they will be ready to fly and the parents will be back on another set of eggs. The squeakers are now ready to wean. Just move them into your young bird section. They will be eating and drinking as well as the adults in a few days.

The Pigeon Life Cycle *(continued)*

Settling Your Youngsters

mates are finished eating. When the mates are full, they will come and trade places and sit on the eggs or squeakers while the pigeon previously sitting on the nest can go and eat.

Many fanciers take their squeakers outside the loft when they're 4 weeks old because they are too young to fly and cannot fly away. The youngsters will sit on the landing board and become familiar with their neighborhood. They also learn how to enter and exit the loft. Both of these are very important. If youngsters are frightened off the landing board before they know their surroundings and entry into the loft, they will probably become lost forever.

The hen will sit on the nest from late afternoon until mid morning. At mid morning, the cock will go into the nest and take over for a while. Now the hen can stretch and relax. Late in the afternoon, she will return to the nest and take over once more. During this time, both the cock and hen begin to form pigeon milk. This milk is made from partially digested grain. They will pump the milk into the newly hatched squeakers when the squeakers place their bill into the bills of their parents.

When the youngsters are first taken outside, they will spend a lot of time just sitting on the landing board and loft. They are becoming familiar with their surroundings and gathering information for their instincts, which will allow them to find their way home.

Hatching

The first egg will begin to pip after 17 days. The squeaker uses an egg tooth to hammer his way out of the egg. One day later, he will crawl out of his shell. After the first one is hatched, the second one will begin to pip his shell.

This is a time when they need to be out for longer periods of time. When they are flying around the loft and are familiar with their surroundings, it is time to shorten their time outside.

The cock and hen will both feed the squeakers pigeon milk. Pigeon milk is partially digested grain which forms in the parent's crops. The squabs grow fast. By the time they are 5 to 7 days old they will be covered with quill feathers and are ready to band.

As the days pass, they will reduce the amount of milk and feed the squabs more and more whole grains. The parents also will be eating more and more, so be prepared to increase their feed ration.



Training Your Pigeons

After the birds have been outside for a proper amount of time, they should be called into the loft. This is done by whistling and shaking the feed can. Just as a lion tamer uses a whip to train his lions, so you must use your feed to train your pigeons.

When your pigeons are hungry, they quickly enter the loft. The ones that are late should not be given any food. This sounds cruel, but you can bet your last dollar they will be first tomorrow. If you plan to let your birds out twice a day, give them 1/3 of their ration in the morning. They will still be hungry enough to come into the loft when you exercise them again in the late afternoon. When you call them into the loft after the afternoon exercise, give them the other 2/3 of their daily ration.

When the first few birds go to drink, you never allow any food to remain out. They must clean it all up. If they don't, take the remaining food and save it for tomorrow. Then, make sure that you cut back tomorrow's ration a little bit. Remember, you want them hungry. You certainly do not want to starve them, but giving them all the food they want is just as bad. When you feed too much, you lose your whip. When you lose your whip, you lose control of your birds.

Be as consistent as you can. Always try to feed them and exercise them at the same time of day. Have a good routine, and follow it every day.

Neighborhood Manners

After several weeks, your birds will be flying for minutes at a time. Once they know where home is and how to enter the loft, you must teach them the other ground rules. They should only sit on your property, and it is best if they only sit on your loft. If they sit on your neighbors house or telephone wires, get them off straight away by throwing something soft at them like a tennis ball. They will soon catch on to the idea that someone else's property is off limits.



Starting the Race Training

When your birds have molted their 3rd flight feather, they are finally ready to take down the road. They should be taken in the same direction from which your local club is flying. If you are not in a club, pick out on direction and stick with it.

Basket your birds by catching them gently. If you have been feeding them carefully and have a good routine, they should be rather tame. If you ruffle their feathers when you catch them, gently put the feathers back into place. If you handle your birds roughly, they will become afraid of you and will fly wildly to escape you.

Pick clear days with very few clouds. It is better to pick a nice day than to pick a bad one and lose most or all of your birds. Train your youngsters in the morning. Young birds do not do as well if you train them down the road late afternoon or evening. Your losses will be much higher with the afternoon tosses.

Take your birds two miles away from home and find a place without any wires. Two miles sounds like a long distance for the first time out, but your pigeons can see much farther than that when they are high in the air. They probably have flown that far away from home many times while they were exercising around the loft. Besides, many fanciers take them 5 miles for their first trip, so don't worry.

The first trip may take them an hour before they come home. This will give you time to get home and wait for their return. As soon as they return



home whistle them inside the loft. They must be trained to enter the loft promptly as soon as they return home. Sometimes only seconds separate the winner from the next pigeon.

The next morning, you should take them back to the same place, if the weather is nice. As soon as they return, call them into the loft. On the third morning, you are ready to take 5 miles. Take them out 5 miles again on the fourth day. Now, you are ready to take them twice each time to 10, 15 and 20 miles.

By the end of the 20 mile mark, your pigeons should have been down the road ten times, if you went to each location twice. They should be coming home faster and faster and entering the loft more quickly each time.

At this point fliers will bring their birds back to a distance of 10 to 12 miles and either single toss or double toss their birds. They feel that this serves two purposes. First, it causes the pigeons to think on their own. Secondly, it will weed the duds that have been following the good pigeons home. The fliers may do this five or six times before moving farther down the road.

At this point, some fliers also give their birds a circle training. That is, the birds get tossed together at 5 miles and 10 miles to the North, South, West, and East. In this way the birds learn their way home from all directions up to 10 miles. Sometimes weather causes the pigeons to miss the mark, and this circle training method helps them to find their way home more quickly.

Now you may take them to the next tosses of 30, 40, 50, 60, 80 and 100 miles. These tosses should be in the same direction as your club flies. You will now be able to ship them to the first race and have confidence that you will have your pigeons home in good time and that they will enter the loft as soon as they return home.





Starting the Race Training *(continued)*

them back to the last place from which they returned home in good time.

The last tip is this. If your birds ever get “smashed” while training, back them up to the last place from which they returned in good time. A “smash” is a term used to mean that the birds became confused and lost. Sometimes only a few birds will return after several days. Many smashes are caused by bad weather. Sometimes smashes just happen. They happen to most fliers, so don't feel bad about it – just make sure you don't give up and try it again. Give the birds a few days to rest, and take



After The Breeding And Racing

Seasons

After your breeders have produced the youngsters to your race team, they should be stopped from raising any more young ones. Some fliers separate the pairs, while others take the real eggs away and let the pairs sit on glass or dummy eggs.

One or the other needs to be done because as the Fall begins, the birds begin to molt. All of their

feathers will be replaced during the Fall. They molt a few feathers each day until all their plumage has been replaced. If you allow the parents to raise youngsters in the Fall, they will not have the strength to replace their feathers properly. The parent's plumage will be dull because they gave too much of their food supply to their late hatched youngsters.

After the racing season

After the racing season, it is time to separate the cocks and hens. They can now finish out their molt and get ready for next Spring. You now have all Winter to think about which pairs will produce your



champion“ champion” . Winter is also the time that many clubs have their shows.



Congratulations....
You made it!





Conclusion

You now have been introduced to the sport of pigeons. We have shown you a few of the basics and we have also taken you through one entire year in the lives of your birds.

You can now become part of this great sport and enjoy the challenges and the rewards that pigeon racing will bring. Always be a credit to your sport – and be a good Ambassador for pigeon racing.

And if you want to take it to the next level, start with [The Digital Mentor Pigeon Racing System](#) which will give you the information and advice you need to become a winner and champion in this great sport!