

TRAINING METHODS for Homers & Racing Pigeons

I'm sure there are 1,001 different methods but I'll share mine.

I assume that you are talking about [young bird](#) training and not old birds.

I raise very early youngsters. I pair my breeders around Thanksgiving and plan my 1st round to hatch at Christmas. I then band (ring) my youngsters around New Year's day. I use the light system so that my youngsters will molt during June/July and have a brand new set of flights for the races.

I have a California type of aviary where the trap door is within the aviary. Weaned youngsters are placed in the young bird loft at 4 weeks of age and trained with a whistle and shaking the feed can to go through the traps. The aviary doors are opened just about an hour before feeding at 6 weeks of age so that they can take their first flights around the loft. Hawks are particularly worrisome at this point.

They are loft flown daily until mid May when I start road training. The youngsters are routing by then where they fly out of sight for 30 - 45 minutes. They are taken on about 10 training tosses. The first is within site of the loft a few hundred yards away. The second toss is at 1 mile. For this training I go in the direction of the race course but I don't think its all that important. Also, I don't work on speed trapping. They're tossed in small groups of 7 or 8 at 15 minutes apart. If you have a partner who can watch for their return and whistle them in, all the better. I don't so I just return after the last toss and usually find them sitting on the loft and then call them in. For this training I'm really interested in developing their homing skills. I will do another at 1 mile, twice at 5 miles, maybe 3 times at 10, then a couple each at 20 and then 30.

This 1st phase of their road training is finished around mid June. Then because my young pigeons were on the light system they begin to molt severely. I separate the boys from the girls. I feed a lot of oil seeds like hemp and safflower and other small seeds to help with feather growth. Give them pigeon tea with honey. Leave them very quiet. Loft fly only if they want alternating the boys one day and the girls the next.

By the first of August they have regrown most all their flights. A few will still have the 9th and 10th coming in. We then begin road training in earnest. I have a refresher where I take them once at 1,5,10,20, and 30. Now this is where it is very helpful to have another person at the loft to work them through the traps as fast as possible. I find it best to do this in the morning and have their feeding consistent with their training. You want them to trap as fast as possible now. If you have an electronic clock go ahead and enter your team and start watching their times. You'll begin to notice your sprinters now.

Now there are many methods used by as many racers on preparing your team a few weeks before the first race. I'm a big believer in having my youngsters an hour in the air daily. The best is on the road. If you loft fly, have them in air for an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening. You

should however try to get them on the road at least 4 times a week from at least 30 to 40 miles.

Regarding direction... Train in the direction of the race course at first. Try to find the break point. Draw lines on a map from the lofts in your club to the release point. Look at the winning lofts last year and see their routes. Toss a few times along their routes about 40 miles from your loft. A GPS unit is pretty handy to help with all this. Personally, I like tossing my birds at times about 90 degrees off the race course as I think it helps with their homing skills.

Now this is very important... toss your birds with another club member or a few members birds at least once before the first race. Trust me if you don't do this most of your youngsters will follow other birds home on their first race. They will probably smarten up by the second race but it's best to sort this out before the season.

Another tip that I plan to do this season is train my youngsters against the wind. You can really strengthen them with this kind of training plus they then know how to handle a tricky windy day of racing which will happen.

I feed my youngsters during training 40% barley, 40% race mix, and 20% pellets.

I know this is a very long post and I apologize. One thing that is very important is to know when enough is enough. Don't over work your birds. When you come into the loft and they're picking themselves off their perches flapping their wings a 100 mph you will know that they're ready to fly. Keep them healthy and don't underfeed but don't overfeed. It's a zen thing and balance is the key as it is in all ways of life.

Hope this helps a little. Good luck with your pigeons.

Way to go, PD.

8 youngsters - that's great. 5 weeks old is perfect for training. You need to start working them through the traps now.

I'm not sure of your trapping arrangement but get them on the landing board with a settling cage or however you can do it. Have them out there a few hours if possible so they can see they're surroundings and whistle and shake the feed so they can go through the trap to dinner. I would suggest that you do this for the next 7 days. I like to feed about an hour before sundown. At this time the youngsters know it's close to dark and won't get too adventuresome.

Then the day before you let them have their freedom, feed only 3/4 of their normal daily ration. This way on "freedom day" they will be a little peckish and won't wander too far. Just let them out about an 1/2 hour before chow time and watch for cats, dogs, hawks, etc. Don't let them leave your site so have your feed & whistle ready before hand. Keep your [older birds](#) in the loft. If they're out the youngsters may want to follow them and might get lost.

Most likely they will fly to the nearest tree or fence and then back to the landing board. They may

make a lap around the loft. Let them do what they want for a 1/2 hour and then whistle them in.

The next day let them have their freedom for 3/4 hour and then the next day an hour. Just stick with an hour for three weeks then let them fly with your older birds.

PD, these youngsters are still growing so keep feeding a high protein mix around 17%. I like giving my youngsters barley when they're learning to fly - about 40% of their feed. Now you don't need to do this, it's just a suggestion. My mix is 40% high protein pigeon mix, 40% barley, and 20% [pigeon pellets](#).

The amount of feed you give them is very critical. I would suggest that you feed only once a day. Measure out what you give them either with a scale, a scoop, or your hand. Let them eat until you see 2 birds go to drink water and then take up the un-eaten feed. Measure what was not eaten and the next day give them only what they ate the day before. Do this for the 1st week while you're working them through the trap. Now when they start flying give them a little more b/c they will be using more energy. But if there's feed left after they've drunk water take it up. Don't leave feed out ever. You'll get fat pigeons, cock roaches and rats if they can get in your loft.

I let my birds eat and then bring the waterers when I'm training them. Now that it's summer a few will come in from a tough flying exercise and will drink before eating. This is OK but until they start flying with your older birds let them start eating and then add the drinkers.

Drift, there's a 101 ways to do train youngsters. This is the way I do it. I know Treesa has had a lot of experience and I think she's posted on some other threads her methods. We have some white bird releasers and they surely have a system working for them. So after you gain some experience and get to know your birds you can personalize it your way. Remember it's more art than science.

Hope this helps...
