

TRAINING YOUNG BIRDS for Homing & Racing Pigeons

Thoughts On Nutrition- by Snowbird

Breeders should get more protein--about 17% or 18%. If you can't get that mix just hand feed them some quality dry dog food that is ground and mixed with warm water--good protein and fat supplement once a day for babies (after 7 days old) and parents.

The baby should be safe if your birds have been respecting each others nest boxes, but there is a vulnerable time once the youngster gets out of the nest but before it gets adult muscle--you have to watch this closely and protect as needed.

Nutrition: Besides good pigeon seed, other must have essentials are greens/carrots and an avian vitamin everyday (if they don't eat greens keep giving them and eventually they will—use an electric dicer to get this food bite sized for pigeons). People in this forum like Prime vitamin which goes in the water and has a probiotic. When they get around nine months old they will start to show an interest in a good multi-element grit but they should have this available at all times.

Though the following are not necessary everyday, they are also essential to optimum health, so once you get these basics down, other things people use are various forms of garlic, brewers yeast, various oils (fish, cod liver, olive, etc.), various teas, [Apple Cider Vinegar](#) (Tsp per gallon in the water), electrolytes, bits of animal protein (mash a pinch of dried dog food and mix with the seed), good soil/clay, prebiotics, and other supplements like Concentrace (multimineral).

Most people medicate for canker and worms, some vaccinate for pox and PMV depending on the frequency in your area. You will get quality meds online from Jedds, Foy's, Siegels, Global [Pigeon Supplies](#), or the Australian Pigeon Company. Meds from pet stores are often inadequate and getting them from the vet will be expensive.

Training--Part I by Lee

Training: here is some expert advice from Lee here at the site:

"I am going to post some training ideas ..ill do one at a time there are three in all. This isnt the only way to do this but it works for me i have been using these methods for years just some of my ideas on the subject ..

Youngbirds under the age of 10 days old should be left alone for the most part it is my belief that they do fine with their parents care. At this age (10 days) the birds will begin to stand up in the nest

and a person should start handling them as this makes the birds tamer. Keep in mind that brides and grooms may some day be holding them for release. During the next two weeks the YBs will begin to move more and more it is also during this time that they may wander into someone's else's nest area so close watch must be kept on the birds to ensure that they don't get scalped by some jealous cock bird. During this time they will learn to eat from the feeder and go to the waterier and will be weaned from their parents care and will take a perch (this is the most stressful time for the YB and if its immune system isn't strong then it will fall to illnesses so watch them closely) You can start to trap train [healthy birds](#) they should be about 25 to 30 days old at this point. If the bird can fly to its perch then it should be able to fly from the trap to the floor.

Trap training: When you start trap training your birds need to be on a good feeding schedule. Start by taking the birds you want to train and put them in the training release cage leave them in the cage for about 30 min this helps to settle the birds down and gets them use to the cage. Set them outside in the shade where they cant be bothered by cats /dogs etc. Place on the landing board of the loft a trap training cage this sits on the landing board and butts up against the trap the other end of the cage has a door where you can place the YB inside the cage. Place the birds 2,3,4, at a time in the cage before their feeding so they are hungry go inside put down the feed and make a feeding noise like a handful of seed in a coke can rattle this and the birds should trap through. If they don't then go out side and gently push them through the trap. Add more birds and do the same procedure until all are through the trap. The point here is for the birds to understand that they have to trap to eat. Usually within three days they will have picked up the trapping and will trap on their own. The key here is repeat again and again and again they will learn quickly. If you have door trap or a sputnik you can put the bird through the trap as in this example however there isn't a landing board so just manually put the birds through...After the birds have learned to trap then you can let them out to exercise. Most fanciers allow their birds out for only an hour I do this or sometimes an hour and a half. You can do this by just opening the trap and they will go out on the landing board after an hour or so close the trap when they hear you rattling the feed can they will come in. be patient these are young birds and need more time ALWAYS!! Let your birds out when they are hungry never after feeding always BEFORE!!

Daily exercise and training: Now that your birds have learned to trap when you call them in to eat it is time to start distance training, there is two ways to do this:

A. You can allow the birds to range on their own .In this method you turn your birds out at least one time a day to exercise after a time the will begin to range, by this I mean they will begin to fly in circle around the loft area. It is natural for the birds to fly an area of about five miles as this is the normal feeding range of the pigeon your birds will do this providing they aren't let out with [older birds](#) in this situation they tend to do as the old birds do and will sit on the loft in the lounge chair and sun. The old birds know where they are don't need to fly the normal ranging area.

B. In this situation you can force the birds to range by taking them out for short jumps and releasing them from their cage to fly back home. This is the method I use, this way I can take older birds out and they will show the newbies the way home. I start this method at about 100 feet from the loft and go from there. I make small jumps and work in all directions North South East and West. If you start at 100 feet then do this for three or four days this will get the birds use to the cage and they

will begin to settle down. They will fly to the loft and usually sit there or get on the ground and peck around. After they sit a while maybe 15 min I take a flag and wave it at the birds this makes them fly again they will soon get the idea that they are out there to exercise. ALWAYS!!! ALWAYS !!! Let them out before you feed .Old trusted birds can go out anytime but Ybs need to come back in the trap when you beckon them and will do so if they are hungry. Move to ¼ mile and take an old bird with you to release. When you get to the release point let the birds sit in the cage for about 15 minutes this gives the birds time to look around and realize where they are (during this time you must look for hawks dogs and so on also make sure that the birds have a clear area to fly into, no wires, trees traffic, buildings and so on.) release the birds and they should circle around and then fly to the loft. Do this two times from this place. Move to the next place on the next day 1/4th mile out but in a different direction (work counter clockwise on the map) The birds will normally fly clockwise so if you work counter clockwise they will be flying back into the area that they have already flown. Do this until you have flown the birds from all directions and have come back to the place you started now move to the ½ mile mark work all around the compass then jump to the 1 mile range always work counter clockwise and repeat repeat, repeat that is the key .Now what you are doing here is allowing the birds to condition themselves and learn this 5 mile circle. After the 1-mile circle go to 2 miles and work around the circle then go to 4 miles work the circle then 6 miles work the circle. I will stop here and post some more in a few days or so.

A few things to remember. Always fly your birds hungry especially Ybs older birds will home hungry or not.10 MPH is the max for wind on training a young bird again old birds can handle 12 to 18 MPH with ease. I have had my old birds out in 25 mph winds just for training purposes, keep in mind that the altitude that they fly the winds will be higher than the ground level also 25 mph winds aren't conducive of a good wedding or funeral for that matter. My cut off point for my Old birds is 15 MPH if I am doing a wedding or a funeral. Training in the rain is ok for old birds but Ybs need more experience (next year). Single bird training is ok after the YB has flown many miles 200 or more what I am saying here is they need experience first then all of the special training will work better and you will lose fewer birds. An old-timer told me one time "son if you don't want to lose your birds then don't let them out " be pre paired for losses it will likely happen remember you are learning as well as the birds...

Training: Part II

"Now you can go to 8 miles work the circle then 10 miles work the circle. At this point your birds should be in good condition. Your birds should be flocking good and all should be coming home at the same time also when they get home they should sit and rest a few min then begin to peck on the ground or begin to flirt with each other and so on. If they just sit and don't inter react with the flock then look closely at the bird and make sure it isn't sick. When you get all the birds coming from 10-mile range you can start to change it up some...

Now lets concentrate on your farthest release point and start to work towards that. Your birds are flying and flocking good from 10 miles out from all directions and it is a good bet that they can hit

that 10 mile circle from any direction meaning if they are out 15 miles they will run into terrain that they know within their normal ranging flight distance (5 miles) so we are going to use the straight line training method from this point on to all of your release points.

You are out to 10 miles, now go to 15 miles toward your farthest release point. We all know that pigeons can fly 50-60 MPH but it is a good pigeon that flies 35-45 MPH on a regular basis so count on your birds to fly at 40 MPH on their way home so from 15 miles out they will need at least 25 to 30 min to complete that. They will be home sooner in most cases but they need the 30 min in case of bad weather or other problems. Keep in mind that they are coming home to eat and will fly straight in. You should be allowing at least 2 hrs meaning that you will release 2 hrs before feeding time Also most folks wont release with less than 2 hrs before dark so this gets them use to working with the 2 hr system. Lets say that they come in from the 15 mile point in 25 to 30 min this is a good time for them if the time is shorter then they are not looking at the terrain (this may mean that they are too hungry) if it is longer than 30 min then they need to be released from that point again as they well may be lost and are still searching for the best route to fly home.

Continue to fly in 5-mile increments towards the outer most points that you will release from until you have met your goals. You should be feeding good quality feed maybe in the 14 to 15 % protein range conditioning feed as it is called. And they need to rest a couple days a week example: fly Monday, rest Tuesday, fly Wednesday, rest Thursday, fly Friday, rest Saturday, bath on Sunday, on the days you rest the birds can be out exercising on their own if ya want. You will need to go to you farthest release point at least once a week to keep the birds in condition you can go to different directions but just keep your birds in the air on a weekly basis. This is good for the birds it also helps with breeding.

Old birds will in fact if they have been released from a point several times just hit the sky and break for home maybe wont circle, maybe will go high and just head for home. This means that the folks on the ground may not get a good show Ybs on the other hand will fly around at different heights and cross the release point maybe 3 times or more before breaking away and heading home.

Pigeons have the intelligence of a 12-year-old child and can maintain the directions in their head for about 6 to 8 months (this varies) but I recommend that if you have to take a break in training (maybe a week or so) that you start at the place you left off from. If longer than that then maybe start from the 10-mile point... You have to learn your birds and know their limitations never ask a bird to fly more than you know they can high winds, rain snow, darkness, outside influences can dampen their skills. Weather is a big factor in our business also space weather or the C factor as it is called can dampen their skills I have some birds that I trust and have had them out in a G3 magnetic storm and they homed well on the other hand I have seen many young birds lost during a G1 or G2 storm (space weather is a science that we don't know much about some folks don't pay any attention to it some do I tend to believe it does affect the homing abilities of pigeons and many other animals you just have to decide what is best for your situation..... "