

Van Gent

Wintertime...

Finally, it was there, the winter, -10 degrees and snow flurries. And at the beginning of February. So with 75% of the lofts the youngsters are in the nests or eggs are laid.

At my own loft I mated the breeders at the 27th January. After 14 days of extra light from 7am till 7pm the breeders were ready. I purchased new LED daylight lamps for the whole loft. I had old ones, about 10 years old and these were getting worse. So I bought new energy saving LED day light lamps. All 11 pairs immediately were OK. All new pairs, but the light and hunger for love did the rest. Then the weather forecast came with graphics that the temperature was going down and below -10 for a week or more. But the breeders did not care less. After 14 days all couples are breeding on their eggs. The lights are out, so they are in normal daylight times again.

What did I do to get this done? How did I treat the pigeons during these hard winter times?

Preparation

There are a few key factors. When it is cold, get the first egg out of the nest, replace it with a fake one and get it in the house. You can keep it at room temperature for two days until the second egg is there. Then you switch them back. You can mark the eggs with a pencil or a marker. When it is a young couple



and I am not sure if they start breeding right away, I sometimes put the eggs for a few days in an incubator. I bought this now one year back with our friends of Ali-Express. For 35 euro's I have one which could hold about 20 pigeon eggs. I bought it, so I could basket my racers also when they are breeding. But now it is very convenient during the winter as well.

Water

Then water. Why water the whole day in the loft, while pigeons are almost not drinking at all. An hour before I feed them, I put the drinker in the loft until an hour after they were fed. Then I remove it again. Like this the

drinkers are not frozen and the birds can get water. They will adjust very fast.

When you have youngsters in the nests, I would give them fresh water in the morning and replace this before feeding and remove the drinkers two hours after feeding. Warmers for drinkers are a waist of energy I think. You can better add a spoon of sugar to the water. That will give the water a freezing temperature of -5 instead of 0. An old trick that works as well.

I also think that this is the time to give them a cure of any kind. They will drink the water and you can almost give them just enough so you can save on your product. This also applies to the mixture and feed.

Feed

When you cure your pigeons by mixing the cure with the feed or attach it with some oil you can do this during the winter days. They are hungry and will eat everything, also when it smells or tastes different.

I try to feed them the same amount as in normal times, I only replace about 20% Barley with a normal mixture. During the winter the racers are here on 80-90% barley, so with cold I give them 60-70% barley and the rest a normal mixture.

The loft

In the first time I have pigeons we had drifting snow. This is snow that falls when it is below 0 degrees and it does not stick. So the wind takes it and it creates dunes of snow. As you can see, I have an open front with my breeders and I have put a piece of plywood in front of the lower part of the front. I hoped that would prevent the snow coming in...it did, but now temperatures are above 0 again I notice that on the ceiling there is also an amount of snow and that is melting now, well I hope it will dry up in the coming days again, I cannot do nothing about it.

I got a lot of pictures of fanciers who have

their breeders in an aviary or in a loft with a total open front. There was even snow around the nests and the pigeons just kept on breeding. They have their own feather blanket.

The racers

After two days of snow the sky cleared. We had beautiful freezing weather. I cleared the sputniks and I let the birds train again. They are not afraid of the snow, they love to fly and to play. This is also a test for me. When the temperatures are extreme, the pigeons that are not healthy will show themselves. They eat much more or less than others, they do not look ok. So this is also a time to keep your eyes open and check the birds. With the Marathon pigeons it is always hard to see if they are cocks or hens and I discovered two cocks with the hens. These yearlings were hidden with the hens for four months now and after the training and the sunny weather they unveiled themselves as cocks. So I had eight cocks more than hens. I removed immediately the three cocks that were already on the list of doubt. I always have extra pigeons during the winter which I can use later in the year to replace a lost pigeon. But there is also a list of doubt. When a pigeon gets on this list the future can be short. And now that was the case for three of them. I was on it and showed himself in a negative way and the two others were on the list as well and with the extra cocks they could exit.

When?

When do we start racing. I am anticipating on a late start of the season. Normally the second week of April, but I expect somewhere between the beginning and the half of May. So mating the racers as late as possible. Will keep you up to date !

Arjan van Gent

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Sussex and the South Coast

with Bob Knowelden

Where here we are well into 2021 and most things are difficult and we hardly go out except for our weekly shop and the odd trip the local chemist to pick up our medications. However both Norma and I went to have our first Covid jab and all went well and I was most impressed with just how well it was all organised, no waiting in long queues and after around 15 minutes it was all over except for a short wait in our car before setting off home.

No news from the South Coast Fed, so I have no idea when the AGM will be going ahead in some form and I feel that as their Press Officer I should be kept in touch with

what is going on. Are we racing this season? And if so when, but I want it known that I will still expect the club Press Officers to phone in their weekly reports to appear in both columns in the BHW and The Racing Pigeon. I hope you all are keeping well and are ready for the season to start. Reading through the pigeon books I see that North Road racing in Sussex is on the cards again and I had a good idea of where it originated and who applied to the Southern Region for affiliation. So it came as no surprise when later during the day I had a phone call from Jon Walls from the Eastbourne RPC to what is going on. Firstly several clubs have

shown a lot of interest and several individual fanciers have offered their services for the Federation Officers once it has been approved. This new Federation will only be for clubs and its members that live and race within the Sussex borders, the main aim is to keep the birdage as low as possible and provide North Road racing to the area. A small transporter is fitted out as you read this and the crates will be the same as the BICC are using. Racing they hope to start with this season's young birds from St Albans and the longest race will be from Newark. Any extra news please get in touch with Terry Pay. Any news that I receive will be printed as soon as I get it, so watch this space.

How I miss the usual shows and sales and a chance to meet up with friendly faces during these cold winter months and for the first time in many years I haven't received

any club reports from the 2020 season and I have no idea who won the Federation as I wasn't sent the promised results. Come on sort it out.

At my end I have decided to stop fishing as I find it to be demanding and that will be a big loss but I shall keep in touch with the Heron Syndicate members as I am a life long member. All my poles, rodes and other requisites will go and this will leave a large gap in my life as I have fished since I was a very young lad, even during the Second World War just about as long as I have been interested in world of pigeons.

Well that's about all for now but if you wish to contact me at any time on 01273 832594, if I am not in please use the answer phone and I will get back to you. So until next time look after yourselves and stay safe, see you.

Bob Knowelden