

▶ Van Gent

WHEN WILL THE WINTER LEAVE OUR TERRITORIES?

We are fed up with the winter. Spring officially began, we have also had Easter by the time you read this. The weather forecast for the following weekend is also filled with cold east winds and snow. In Belgium they already cancelled three weekends of racing, here in the Netherlands also races are cancelled in view of the cold weather.

There were fanciers that were not happy with the cancellation of the races. Snow was falling down but Belgian fanciers wanted to race. Afterwards blaming the organisers that the race was bad and pigeons were lost.

Crazy people! We had years that we had mad cow disease, Swine Flu, Bird Flu etc. Back then we were not allowed to transport the birds, now we do not want to transport them in this kind of weather.

Fanatic Sprinters paid their toll

The short distance specialists who did not wait for nature already had their losses. I heard more than one fellow fancier who had major losses or pigeons coming home a day later totally worn down. So these had to recuperate for a week or more. So please pay attention and when you are amongst the ones described above, please keep this in mind for next time this happens. It is better to train your birds less with good weather than a lot with bad weather.

Here in West-Knollendam

I do not mind, because I do not basket my pigeons when the temperature is below 10 degrees. For me personally I am more a fan of the temps between 18 and 24 degrees. But it would be nice that the Spring takes over the climate. I have also a daytime job and with the daylight saving time beginning in the last weekend of March, I am not able to train my birds during the week. When I return home early I have time to train one session with one group. So or the youngsters or the hens or the cocks.

The racers are already in the Widowhood system with one youngster in the nest box. So the cock or the hen has to take care of the youngster. When one group is doing their training, the other group goes into the loft without nest boxes. This rotation method is commonly

used.

Training is not the same as racing. Even when pigeons train for an hour, they are less stressed and do not have to use their orientation at the maximum. When they have to search they lose a lot of weight and muscle power.

In the meantime my breeders have their 2nd round of youngsters and some couples are already on their 3rd round of eggs. I put an extra nest bowl in their nest box when the first round of youngsters were 10 days old. That helps and now there are couples that have almost one round of youngsters more than others. For me this is very nice, in view of the number of youngsters from one couple that I can train for the future with the youngster races.

If everything goes as planned we start with the sprint races the second week of April. But before that I would like to get my flyers or racers in the basket for some training tosses. First to 10km or so and then to my work area and that is about 25km. If I have still time I might do this last one twice. Then we have the opportunity to basket on the early Sunday mornings for 115km. This is every Sunday and they have already started with this, but I assume there are not as much fanciers who are participating in this. But they do this until late September. So when the birds need an extra toss or the weather was very bad on Saturday and better on the Sunday, you can also choose for this option.

Comparison with cycling

You can make the comparison with cycling and our pigeons easily. The classic races in Flanders are already taking their toll. There are multiple cyclists who now already have to pass on the Tour of Flanders, one of the biggest one day races. They caught a cold in the previous classic races and preparation races and now they are too sick to compete. So be careful with your racers, they need to compete also at the end of April, early May.

More time for other, also important things

This gives us more time to prepare the

things you use with pigeon racing. I see it every year that there are fellow fanciers transporting their birds in baskets that have not been cleaned during the winter and there are some that did not clean their baskets for several years. So now you have time to clean your baskets, give them a good scrub and disinfect them. You also have the time to prepare your Electronics. So install the stuff, check if everything is in working order and get your rings in the clock and put them on the pigeons. Maybe it is an idea to scrub your sputniks, if you use these, check the dust on the ceiling of your loft. When there are trees or bushes growing behind your loft and these are not trimmed for years, maybe it is an idea to trim these. Why? These might affect your ventilation in the loft. Furthermore check your pigeons for feather lice and shank lice. The little red lice are killing for the condition of a racing pigeon, and treat your pigeons accordingly.

If not already done, you can make a planning per pigeon and per race. You can keep it in your loft and then you can always check the planning. There are always reasons to change the planning, but then at least you have a reference.

With other words, get prepared, because when the season gets on its way, you do not have the time for getting prepared!

Raptors

As far as I can read there is also a big problem concerning Raptors in the UK. Here in the Netherlands the problem gets bigger and bigger. The Peregrine, Kestrel and the female sparrow hawk are the main problem. I have within 100 meters from my loft a Buzzard. He is too slow for the pigeons but they are scared of him. But I prefer the Buzzard in view of the fact that other birds of prey will not hunt in his territory. But people with this problem tried everything. I have heard that what they call here the flying pigeon trainer is a solution that is able to work. This is a gas filled balloon with a long pole and a log wire that is dancing in the wind while the pigeon do their training rounds. So when you have a working solution against these fearless birds, please let me know!