

# ▶ Van Gent

## COVID-19, what to do when you are in a lockdown

In these times it is hard to plan ahead. Normally a pigeon fancier is planning towards the season start and the highlights of the season. But now, when the season is uncertain and there are no goals, what can you do? And are there benefits?

Normally we start here in the Netherlands the season in the first week of April. So all sprint lovers had their pigeons prepared for this. So all youngsters are already bred, the racers are on widowhood and everything is prepared.

Then Covid-19 struck and the government put in a intellectual lockdown. So we are able to get out of the house for grocery shopping or exercise. But not in groups larger than 3, keeping 1.5 metre distance (5 feet) and we are advised to stay at home as much as possible. Sport clubs, bars, restaurants, cinemas are closed. So we are restricted but not grounded. We must work from home if possible and that is what we do.

Every day I thank that I have my pigeons. It keeps me motivated, disciplined and gives me a lot of entertainment.

### What to do now?

I read and hear a lot of ways to deal with this. There are people who say that when we are able to race, the whole schedule will be pushed backwards into September even October. I personally think that the schedule will be amended and that there will be a shorter season, but still a season. My specialty the Marathon races will be on the bad end of it. We need to get training and distance into the pigeons, and when the time is limited, there will be less races.

But back to the question: What to do now? There are several options.

Option 1: Keep the racers in a winter like feel and environment. So separate them, darken the loft and keep them on a very limited winter regime food wise. Keep them hungry and at ease. Train them around the loft, but not regularly and change timing. For myself this was not an option, because my breeders



One of the two race lofts. Both are identical. This is the first day they were mated and free on the loft.

were mated at the end of January and the youngsters needed to go into the loft where the race hens were during the winter.

Option 2: When you are a Widowhood racer, place them on Widowhood as planned. Train them irregular and toss them on short distances. And every 10 or 14 days, you toss them and treat this like a race. So give them a few hours together, or even a night. When the season starts, you mate them again, and after 10 days eggs or even a youngster you put them on widowhood again.

Option 3: Long distance racers. Mate the racers as late as possible. I was able to postpone mating until the 25th March. But there are fanciers here that are able to postpone it until the end of April. Then you have two choices. After 10 days on eggs, separate them and keep them on widowhood as described in option 2. When you are racing natural, you can let them have one youngster each couple and then you are again



My inbred 'Sophie' (Jelle Jellema) breeding couple on their second round.

about seven weeks further into the year. You can buy yourself some time there.

Option 4: Just do as you normal do and do not bother about not having a normal race season.

#### What else

Start thinking about giving the racers extra light after the longest day and keep the longest day in view of light during July and August. When you want to do this, try to find True Light Daylight lamps. There are a lot of options that you can buy, even LED lights.

Start to plan what you are going to do with your pigeons when there are no races. Are you able to train the youngsters for some tosses and how are you going to make a selection of birds for 2021?

Are you going to breed less youngsters? Are you going to eliminate birds

that are now in your race team where you had your doubts on or that are getting too old to race next year?

Now you have extra time to make loft improvements. Why not? This is a better time of the year to do small repairs or changes than during the winter. Or give the loft a nice paint job!

#### Benefits

You can also see some benefits. When you have children and they are at home all day, you can introduce them to the sport. Or neighbours can be introduced. You can explain what you are doing, why and what the fun is.

Further there will be bargains in the market. Large breeding stations and fanciers cannot export their birds, so they will have plenty of stock. Or you can obtain eggs for cheap and hatch them on

your own loft. (My preferred method of adding racers, they adjust much better to the loft when they are born on your own loft!). For instance, eggs of Widowhood racers. Be active and do not hesitate to contact the fancier you have your eyes on. NOW IS THE TIME!

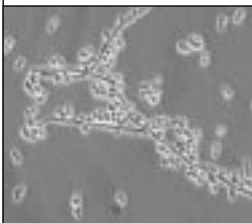
#### Finally

Keep the spirits up. Contact your pigeon friends by phone or drive by and talk to them according to the regulations of the government. Be creative. I took for instance a basket with pigeons to a fellow fancier and while keeping our distance we discussed the birds out in the open.

And when a fellow fancier asks for help, try to give it or to do it. Think about each other.

**Arjan van Gent**  
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