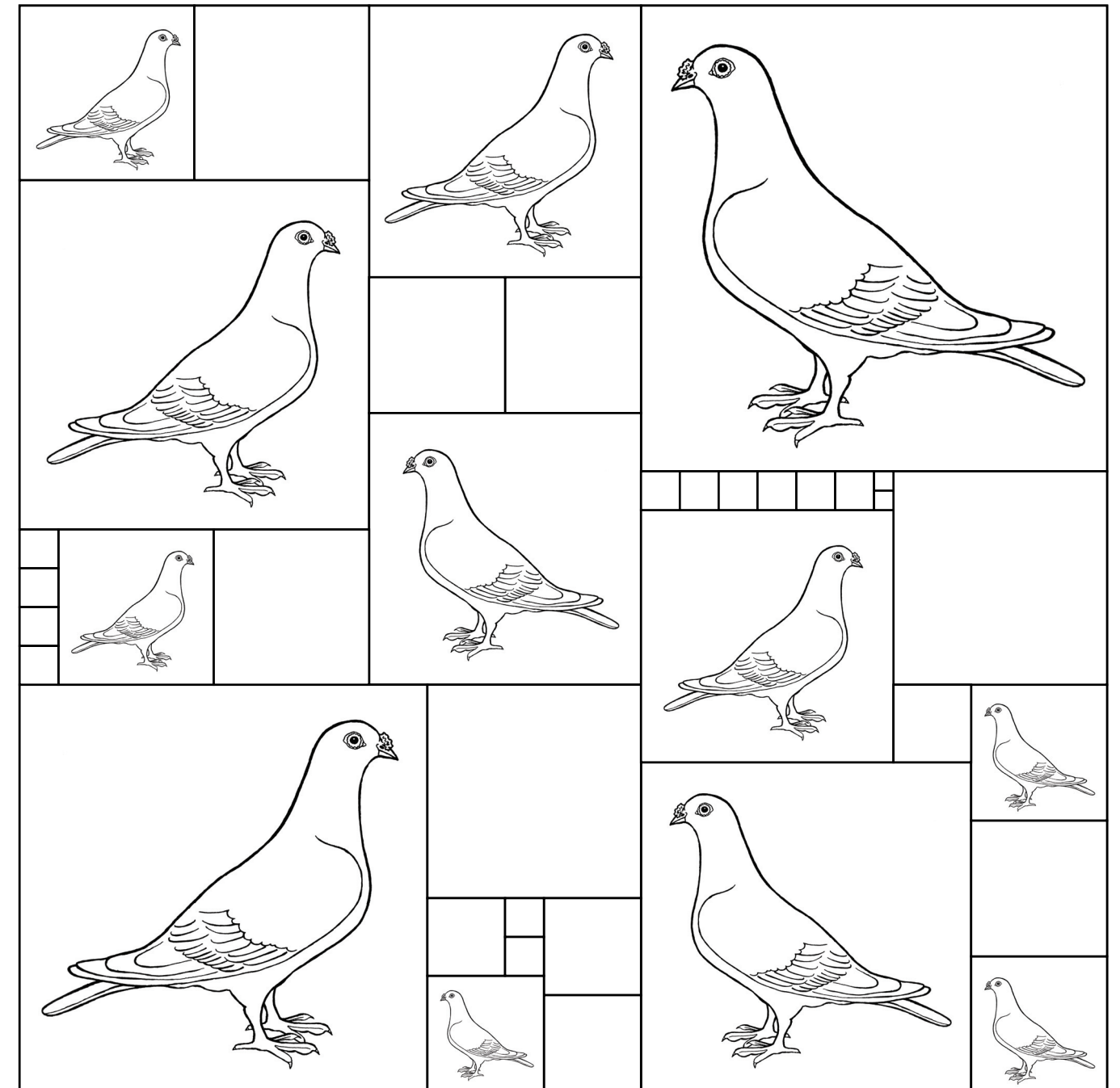


# PIGEONS



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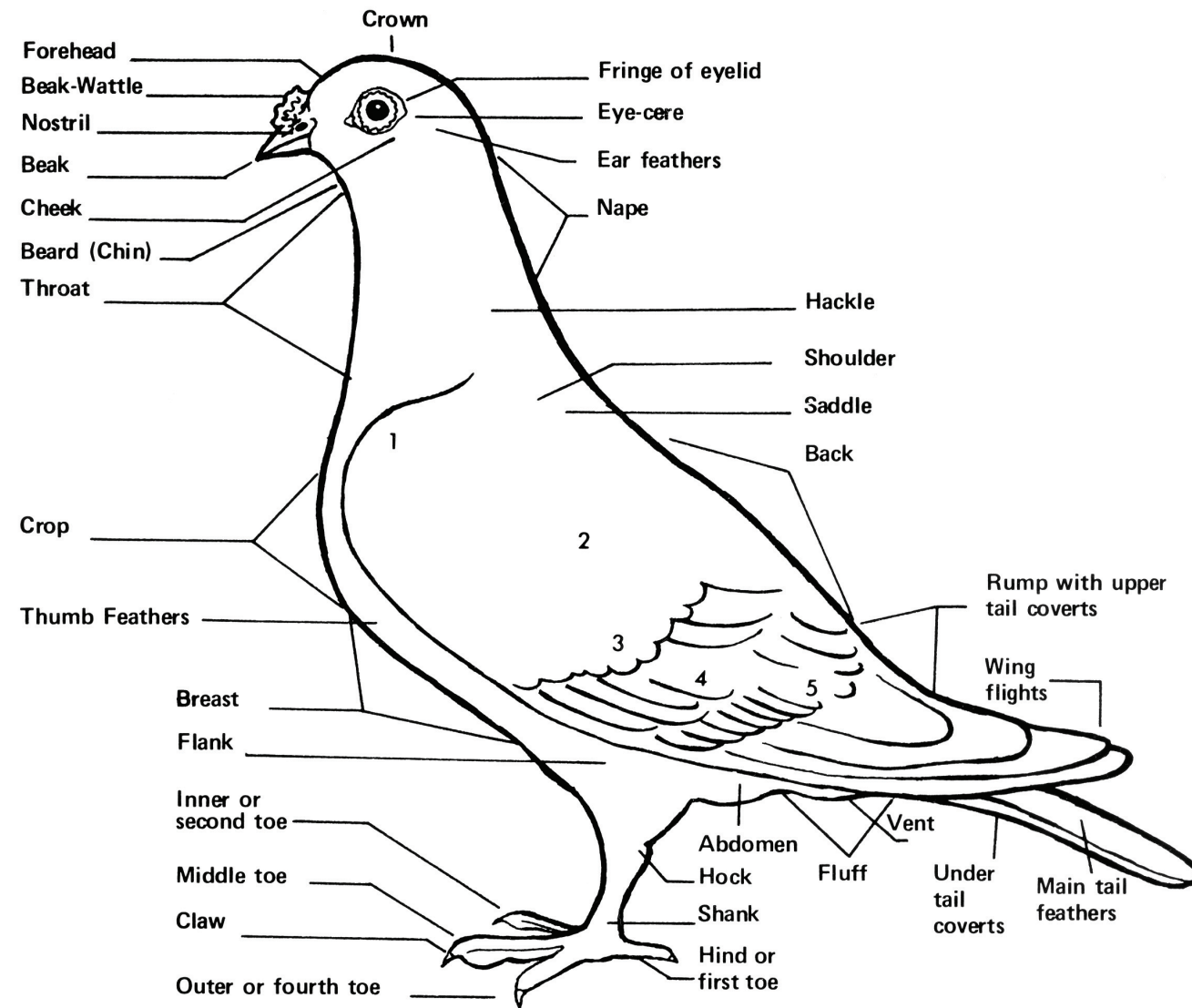


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## APPENDIX 2: PIGEON FEATURES



- Wing:
- 1. Wrist or wing butt
  - 2. Lesser coverts
  - 3. Middle coverts
  - 4. Second wing bar
  - 5. First wing bar

## CONTENTS

Introduction .....	2	Pigeons Pests .....	8
Opportunities to Learn, Do.....	2	Handling Pigeons .....	9
For Beginners		Training, Grooming for Shows .....	9
For the More Experienced		Use of a Show Stick	
For "Old Hands"		Grooming	
History of Pigeons .....	3	Pointers	
Behavior of Pigeons .....	3	Exhibits and Shows .....	9
Feeding Pigeons .....	4	Grouping Breeds	
Banding and Record Keeping.....	5	Showing Pigeons	
Breeding Record Chart .....	6	For More Information .....	10
Housing and Equipment .....	6	Appendix 1: Pigeon Breeds .....	11
Diseases and Parasites .....	7	Appendix 2: Pigeon Features .....	12



## INTRODUCTION

Pigeons have been one of man's closest associates for more than 4,000 years. They perform many useful functions. In addition they have many qualities that make them useful for laboratory and research purposes. Some of the varieties have been selected for fancy colors and interesting forms. These can be truly things of beauty. Others have been selected for their endurance and homing instinct.

Pigeons readily adapt themselves to living under a variety of conditions. Their diet is simple. Pigeons are easily tamed and are normally free from objectionable odors. The noises made by pigeons are not loud or harsh. Therefore, it is an easy matter to keep pigeons in cities, towns or other urban locations. Pigeons require little space and can be obtained at reasonable cost. For these reasons pigeons enjoy considerable popularity among persons of all ages and walks of life.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN, DO

The keeping of pigeons can be the introduction to a varied set of experiences and activities. In the course of these activities, both the newcomer to the fancy and the old-timer in the hobby will gain knowledge, receive enjoyment and be a part of a thoroughly enjoyable and wholesome sport.

In the beginning, the person keeping pigeons will want to do several things to gain experience with the birds and confidence in his or her ability to care for them.

The following suggestions are offered realizing that they may be very elementary for some people but will be very meaningful to others.

### For Beginners

Things you may wish to do:

1. Build or secure the necessary equipment:
  - Housing
  - Feed and water facilities
  - Shipping crates
  - Storage containers
  - Nests, perches, etc.
2. Obtain at least two pairs of the same breed and variety (color)
3. Attend one or more pigeon shows
4. Exhibit your birds
5. Band your birds and keep total records
6. Select your best birds to be retained as future breeders

Things you may wish to learn:

1. The history of our association with pigeons
2. The requirements of pigeons, life cycle, predator protection, etc.
3. Characteristics of breeds
4. The various physical differences between breeds
5. The behavior and individual differences between specimens of the same breed and variety
6. Social activity and arrangements of pigeons
7. Sanitation and hygiene as related to bird life
8. How to protect and guard pigeons from pests and diseases
9. How to train and tame for shows

### For the More Experienced

Things you may wish to do:

1. Increase the size of your breeding flock
2. Break and re-mate to other partners two or more pairs
3. Assist with a stage or pigeon show

Things you may wish to learn:

1. How to evaluate pigeons and give reasons
2. How to use a mating coop
3. How to plan and give demonstrations
4. How to "sell" your hobby to the public

### For "Old Hands"

Things you may wish to do:

1. Raise some homing pigeons
2. Raise some performing pigeons
3. Dress squabs for market
4. Remodel your pigeon quarters considering all you have previously learned about pigeons
5. Exhibit at larger shows

Things you may wish to learn:

1. How to train pigeons for free flight
2. The advantages of proper records and equipment
3. The value of doing a job well

## APPENDIX 1: PIGEON BREEDS

Mankind has kept pigeons under various conditions of domestication for at least 5,000 years. During this time, various combinations of color, shape, size and performance have been selected. The great number of breeds literally offer a shape and personality to suit any person.

We have Racing Homers. These pigeons return to their homes at incredible speeds from distances of as great as 600 miles. At one time, these were used to carry messages on battlefields.

We have selected some pigeons for their large size and use these for meat production. The young pigeons (28-30 days of age) are called "squabs." Squab is a gourmet food item

served in fancy restaurants in this country. However, in many foreign countries it is frequently served on many family dinner tables.

Some pigeons have the ability to perform intricate maneuvers in flight (roll, tumble, spin, etc.). Several breeds are named based on these abilities.

Many pigeons are selected and bred for their beauty of color and form only. These are called "fancies" and include the Fantails, Pouters, Modenas, Frills, Jacobins and Owls.

There are nearly 800 different combinations of shape and color in the world of pigeons. In general, the term "breed" refers to the various shapes or forms. The color variations within each breed are known as "varieties."

Following is a description of a few of the more common or numerous breeds.

Groups	Breed	Features
Sporting	Rollers	Small and trim. Good flyers. Most will perform intricate maneuvers (roll or spin) in the air.
Sporting	Homers	Possess an uncanny sense of direction. Powerful flyers that will rapidly return to their home over distances as far as 600 miles.
Utility	Kings	Large with a square build. Full, well-rounded breasts. Often used for squab production.
Utility	Carneau	Large, medium length. Very prolific, good parents. Often used for squab production.
Utility	Mondains	Large; gentle disposition. Good parents. May be used for squab production.
Fancy	Fantails	Small size with a greater than average number of tail feathers which are carried spread like a saucer. Heads are carried over the back and may tremble or pulsate.
Fancy	Pouters	Come in many sizes and shapes; some have feathered legs and feet. All have the ability to inflate their crops with air. This is a gesture or display of bafoonery (showing off).
Fancy	Frills	Medium sized. Very short beaks. Bib or ruffle or curled feathers on their breasts and short feathers on their shanks. Many delicately laced color patterns. Require foster parents.
Fancy	Jacobins	Long and slender. Rosette of feathers on either side of the neck so as to almost hide the head. Unusual and attractive in appearance.
Fancy	Owls	Small and compact size. Short beaks. African variety required foster parents.
Fancy	Modenas	Compact, rather square build and medium size. More than 25 color variations.





To simplify the classification of the many breeds and varieties for county fairs and small local shows, the following suggestions are offered as a guide.

### Grouping Breeds

Group the breeds as to:

1. Sporting (Performing)
2. Utility
3. Fancy

Following is a partial list of breeds and their groupings. Most other breeds should be listed in Group 3, Fancy.

Group	Breeds
1.	Homers, Rollers, Tumblers
2.	King, Carneau, Mondain, Hungarian
3.	Fantails, Jacobins, Modenas, Frills, Pouters, Owls, Trumplers

### Showing Pigeons

All participants enter a pigeon show with the idea of comparing their birds and hoping to win a highly sought-after prize. The rules of conduct for all participants apply and there can be only one winner in each class. Therefore, the attitude of the person is a mark of sportsmanship and a qualification that makes a truly good pigeon raiser.

During shows, it is important to listen to judges as they present their oral reasons and placings. It is one thing to win; it is another to know why you won. If you did not win, learn how you may improve your birds to increase your chances of winning at the next exhibition.

Remember, perfection is hard to attain in anything. The bird that comes nearest to the ideal for its breed, sex and variety in the eyes of the judge is the one that will get the ribbon. Learn to visualize what the ideal for your breed should be and strive to produce birds as near to this ideal as possible. Then follow the good grooming and training tips in this guide and you will be ready for show.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- American Flying Tumbler Club: <http://www.boomspeed.com/olag/aft/american.htm>.
- American Pigeon Club, William Smith - Sec., 890 Thurmond Road, Thurmond, NC 28683. National club that sponsors shows and distributes bands.
- American Racing Pigeon Union, P.O. Box 18465, Oklahoma City, OK 73154-0465: <http://www.pigeon.org/index.html>. Site also features a Kidz Korner.
- International Federation of American Homing Pigeon Fanciers, PO Box 374, Hicksville, NY 11802: [www.ifpigeon.com](http://www.ifpigeon.com). The oldest pigeon racing organization in the U.S.
- International Institute of Pigeons and Doves, P.O. Box 18476, Oklahoma City, OK 73154, phone (800) 882-1586.
- National Pigeon Association, P.O. Box 439, Newalla, Oklahoma 74857-0439: <http://www.npaua.com/>. An all-breeds pigeon club whose primary area is fancy pigeons or "exhibition breeds." Source for the reference guide, *Pigeons of North America in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Also offers a NPA Junior Program at <http://www.npajuniors.com/>, with lots of links to pigeon-related groups.
- Pigeon Cote: <http://members.aol.com/duiven/cote.htm>. A cote is a small shed or shelter for birds. At this web site, you will find lists of pigeon clubs by state, descriptions and photos of breeds, veterinary advice, some pigeon games, and more.
- Pigeon Debut Magazine, P.O. Box 271026, Oklahoma City, OK 73137, phone (405) 686-0412. Journal-type magazine filled with club news and interesting articles.

### HISTORY OF PIGEONS

Pigeons have had a long and colorful history in the service of humans. Earliest records indicate that we had a deep interest in the breeding of pigeons. Our early efforts at breeding and selection soon gave us pigeons with different colors, shapes, sizes and abilities, which lead to the development of the homing and racing pigeons.

Pigeons have been widely used to carry messages, especially in times of war. They are employed in rescue work and have been used to carry messages from ships to nearby land areas. Pigeons have often been used by "underground" movements and persons engaged in subversive activities where other forms of communication could be traced.

Today pigeons are bred for:

1. Racing and homing (sporting)
2. Meat production (utility)
3. Exhibition (fancy)

Meat production with pigeons is a sizable industry in many metropolitan areas. The young birds known as squabs are taken from the nest at 28 to 30 days of age. At this time the feathers are nearly mature. This means the bird is easy to dress. Also they have not yet begun to fly so the flesh is very soft and tender and the body weight is usually very good. Once the young pigeon leaves the nest and begins free flight, the flesh becomes very solid and the body weight decreases.

Some pigeon fanciers believe that pioneer aviators learned to do many of their maneuvers by observing the flight of pigeons. Such feats as loops are patterned closely after similar movements in the flight of pigeons.

### BEHAVIOR OF PIGEONS

Pigeons mate in pairs and generally remain paired to each other for life. When a pair has gone through the courting stage and mated, the two are ready to build a nest and hatch young. They remain true to each other as long as they live or as long as they are allowed to remain together. If a mating is broken by death or separation, the birds will mate again with other birds. This rule of constancy is rarely broken and may be depended upon even in large flocks.

Some dealers are rather cautious in talking about mated pairs but speak about selling pairs of pigeons without saying anything about mating. Insist upon getting mated pairs when you buy breeders.

Birds which have mated may be shipped long distances without breaking the matings, although occasionally a pair breaks their mating from relocation or the influence of unmated outsiders in the pen with them.

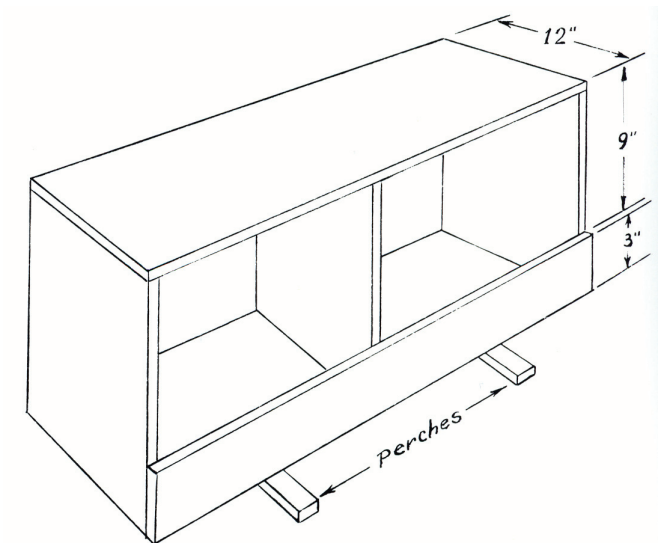
In providing nests for a loft, at least two nests for each pair of birds should be provided. This gives the birds a chance to find a nest to use while the squabs are maturing in another, as after the birds begin to breed they will have eggs in one nest while they have a pair of squabs to feed in another.

The nest boxes are easily made. Some wooden boxes approximately 12 inches square can be attached to the wall. (See Image 1.)

To build a series of nests, boards one foot wide on which 1 x 1 inch cleats are nailed one foot apart can be set against the wall to form the bottom of the nests. Then boards one foot square are cut and laid against these cleats. When the work is done, you will have a series of nests one foot each way, each shelf forming the bottom of a nest and the top of the one under it. A three inch front to which a perch for each nest is attached completes the nest.

A good supply of nesting material should be provided for the pigeons. This may be short straw or coarse hay in short lengths, but the best material is tobacco stems which may be purchased from pigeon supply houses. These tobacco stems prevent insects from being harbored in the nests and save a great deal of trouble in this way.

Image 1: Nest Boxes



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The breeding habits of pigeons are unique. When a male has selected the female he desires for his mate, there follows a course of true love-making in which the male struts around his favorite, coos to her and evidently tries to show her what a grand bird he is. The female, if attracted by her wooer, becomes friendly with him and the two “bill” each other very much as if they were exchanging kisses.

The two then select a nesting place and build a nest and the cock bird becomes very anxious for the hen to begin laying. If she does not promptly take up her duties, he will drive her into the nest, “talking” angrily to her and striking her with his wings.

Finally, the hen goes to the nest and lays an egg. Then she misses a day and lays a second egg, this being all that are laid at one time.

As soon as the first egg is laid, incubation begins. The hen occupies the nest from about 4 p.m. until 4 p.m. the next day. The cock then sits while his mate eats and rests. In this order the incubation goes on and at the end of about 17 days, the egg first laid hatches, and usually about 24 hours later the other one hatches.

Thus, one of the younger birds is a day older than the other and sometimes will dominate to the extent that the younger nest mate is deprived of food.

The old birds begin immediately to feed the young and they grow rapidly. The young, which are known as squabs, are kept well filled by their parents with a fluid called “Pigeon Milk.” It is a combination of secretions from the parents’ crops and later on will be augmented by partially digested feed. On this diet the young seem to literally grow while you watch them.

In a few days the hen is ready to lay again, and if there is a spare nest box the pair makes another nest and the hen lays two eggs, after which the couple is kept very busy incubating one pair of eggs and at the same time feeding a pair of rapidly growing squabs.

When the squabs are about four weeks old, they are often heavier than they ever will be again in their lives, as they have reached full size and are very fat. It is at this time that they are taken from the nest and sent to market as squabs.

If not taken from the nest about this time, the old birds, desiring to start in with another pair of eggs, push the squabs out and they fall on the floor of the loft so that they

can hardly get about. Here they become lean while learning to eat for themselves and soon become sleek and trim, instead of being fat and awkward.

This doubling up with families shows the necessity of providing at least two nest boxes for each pair of pigeons in a loft. It is even better to have more than two nests for each pair, as this gives them some liberty of choice and often saves quarreling between two pairs.

As pigeons mate for life, it is very important that only mated or “married” pairs are kept together. If an odd cock or an odd hen is left in a loft, there are family troubles without end; and the quarrels which arise from this, result in broken eggs and squabs killed in the fights.

It sometimes happens that a pair will not produce young. This is because one of the birds is barren. In such case they should be separated and a new mate for each furnished. It is best to shut the two birds to be mated together in a box with a wire partition between them until they become acquainted with each other, after which they will usually mate, although they do not always do so.

## FEEDING PIGEONS

Pigeons eat a simple diet. A mixture of whole grains, some good hard grit and plenty of fresh, clean water is all that is required.

The feed, grit and water should be placed in containers spaced some distance apart. These containers should be made so that very little, if any, dirt or filth can get into the feed and water.

Pellets (checkers) are made for pigeons. These are pressed clumps of a mixture of finely ground grains and other food particles. Pellets may produce loose droppings when fed as the only feed. A mixture of grain and pellets will correct this condition. This may be fed as a 50-50 ratio or as low as 25% of one and 75% of the other. Pellets are a desirable feed for breeders feeding squabs in the nest as they digest very rapidly and thus enable the parent to regurgitate a considerable quantity of partially-digested feed in a given day. Some breeders prefer to feed pellets in the morning and grain in the evening. This has the advantage of better fortifying the bird during the time when it is on the nest or roost at night.

Cafeteria style feeding, that is, placing each feed ingredient in a separate container, allows the bird to choose and satisfy its own desires. When cafeteria style feeding is being employed, it is necessary to use feeders that prevent waste. Birds

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Finally, all pigeon coops should be equipped with locks and kept locked at all times to protect them from theft or deliberate and willful damage.

## HANDLING PIGEONS

Always grasp the birds so the thumb is clasped over the bird’s back and the fingers encircle the breast and the legs are secured between the first and second fingers. In this way the wings are held close to the bird’s body and are not allowed to flap and break or damage feathers or injure the bird.

## TRAINING, GROOMING FOR SHOWS

Although pigeons can be shown without any special training or grooming before a show, the time spent on this activity can be very rewarding. Whether it is a fancy or utility bird, some special training or grooming can make the pigeon exhibit its best qualities. With fancy breeds (e.g., fantails) special care of the tail feathers before the show can make the bird appear at its best.

### Use of a Show Stick

Training a pigeon with a show stick so it will exhibit itself to full advantage can also make the difference between winning and losing.

What is a show stick? A show stick can be a ¼-inch dowel pin with rounded end 15-18 inches long or a specially made telescoping rod which can be purchased. Either will work well. It is used to pose or position the bird in the judging coop.

Place the pigeon to be trained in a cage about the size of a standard show cage. Pointers in training:

1. If the bird needs to stand more erect, touch it gently with the show stick under the breast.
2. In the case of a fantail, if the bird does not tilt back enough, touching in the area of the crop or the forepart of the breast will cause the bird to tilt back as desired.
3. A pigeon which tends to stand with its tail down, when it should carry the tail in an upright position, can be corrected of this trait by tapping the bird in the area of the vent or at the base of the tail. Repeated training should get the bird to maintain proper balance.
4. Carriage of the wings and head can also be corrected using the show stick to apply slight pressure or assistance to certain areas of the body.

Spend a little time training a pigeon to display itself and before long the bird will “show” every time someone comes near his cage. Once that is accomplished, your pigeon or pigeons are ready for any kind of pigeon show.

### Grooming

Pigeons like to keep themselves clean and tidy in appearance. Although not a waterfowl, the pigeon enjoys taking a bath. Therefore, water should be provided in a shallow pan for bathing purposes at least once weekly.

Depending upon the number of birds in your loft, use a pan large enough to take care of all the birds. Providing water for weekly bathing will help your pigeons keep clean, in good health and aids in prevention of external parasites, such as lice. Use lukewarm water for bathing during winter months. To prevent colds and other diseases, provide bathing water on sunny and warm days only.

### Pointers

1. Wipe dust from the bird with a soft cloth. Use a drop of baby oil on the cloth used to wipe the feet and legs.
2. Clip beaks of birds with nail clippers so upper and lower beaks are the same length.
3. Cut or trim toenails that have grown abnormally long or crooked.
4. Shape (smooth or bend) ruffled feathers where possible.
5. Pluck undesirable feathers on feet and legs or on other parts of the body if they are abnormal in color or shape.
6. Never show a bird which is in molt. Regardless of how good your bird may be, a lack of feathers ruins its appearance. To speed up new feather development during molting, use feeds of higher protein, such as Canadian peas or field peas, if available.

## EXHIBITS AND SHOWS

Pigeon breeding is usually a hobby, but it can also be a sport. To further the interest in pigeons as a hobby and to establish the competition necessary to make it a true sport, exhibitions and shows are valuable and necessary. Whether the show is a small get together in somebody’s backyard to compare birds or a large organized exhibition with thousands of bird breeders from all parts of the country, the same fundamentals exist.

Birds are entered according to breed, variety and sex. They are often classified according to working birds, performing birds or strictly exhibition birds.





**Colds** – A variety of “colds” producing watery eyes or puffiness around the eyes and with or without a raspy rattling sound when breathing may be experienced. Birds in many instances appear entirely normal except for the appearance of the head and they may continue to eat and drink. Others may show no symptoms at all and be noticed only by the noisy rattle when breathing. This is especially noticeable at night. In both cases the birds appear warmer than normal when held in the hand. Antibiotics in the feed or water or injected directly into the birds are the recommended treatments.

**Pigeon Pox** – This disease may be a problem although it is not common in Wisconsin. These are hard, crusty light-colored sores that appear around the mouth or the eyes and can, in some instances, develop to the point where they will obstruct vision and hinder the bird in eating and drinking. Vaccination for this disease is an effective means of preventing it. Since it spreads rather slowly from one bird to another, vaccination can be of value after the first case has been positively identified.

However, vaccination at this time may produce a few deaths among birds already exposed but will definitely prevent the disease in the unexposed members of your flock.

Waterers are a common vehicle of disease transmission. Since every bird drinks several times each day, a dirty water fountain that has become infested with disease organisms can rapidly affect your entire flock. Remember to clean all waterers each day.

If a disease condition appears in your flock, the first step is to get a reliable diagnosis. The diagnosis can be had from the State Animal Health Laboratory or a local veterinarian specializing in small animals and pets.

#### Do's

1. Remove and isolate any sick bird.
2. Give sick birds good “nursing” care.
3. Isolate “new” birds brought into your flock.
4. Burn completely any bird that dies.

#### Don'ts

1. Use medication without getting an accurate diagnosis.
2. Give other than prescribed dosage.
3. Purchase breeding stock from a flock where sick birds are observed.
4. Buy thin or weak birds.

Many pigeon fanciers find that gravel on the floor of the fly pen or ground where fly pens are located helps to keep the surface clean and presentable. Rain will wash the droppings through coarse gravel and into the soil. Usually there is a minimum of fecal contamination or mold growth on the gravel surface. Elevated fly pens with wire floors are also desirable.

## PIGEON PESTS

Several of our common animals and birds become nuisances and are pests in the keeping of pigeons. Cats very frequently kill birds and rob nests where they can gain access to the nesting area. Where coarse mesh wire is used for fly pens (one-inch mesh or larger), it is a good idea to use window screen or hail screen to a height of 18 inches up from the ground to prevent cats from reaching through and catching birds walking near the fly pen walls.

Any place where feed and water are constantly available, as they are in a pigeon coop, rats and mice will be a problem. (See Image 4.) Measures for combating these pests include: cement floors, tin or other metal floors and small mesh wire (not larger than ¼ inch) over all openings in the building, including the side walls and top of the fly pen. This latter treatment will also prevent the entry of snakes. Snakes are not usually a problem with pigeons, although they have been known to rob nests and consume young squabs.

It is suggested that trees, shrubbery or tall growing flowers, such as sun flowers or hollyhocks, be planted around the pigeon coop to provide some screening and shading. This vegetation will help conceal your birds from curious people in the neighborhood and protect them from the heat of the sun in the summer.

All pigeon coops should be kept clean. Virtually no one will object to a well-cared-for pigeon coop. The beauty of the birds and their activity make them desirable additions to any neighborhood. However, they do require care and if neglected can become unsightly and a nuisance.

Image 4: Pigeon Pest



selecting their own choice of feeds from a cafeteria system have a tendency to be rather wasteful in the search for the ideal kernel or particle of feed. The best practice is to keep some feed before birds at all times. If they are allowed to consume all of the available feed, they should be without feed only a short period of time. Birds producing young for slaughter as squabs should never be without feed.

Mixed grains are usually fed to pigeons. Field or Canadian peas together with flint corn, whole wheat and the various grain sorghums are the most common components of pigeon grain mixes. Commercially-mixed pigeon grains are available from most feed companies. A good mixture of pigeon grains will be free from dust and broken or cracked kernels. Pigeons like the whole grains and reject any attempt at cracking or grinding.

Feeders or other receptacles for pigeon feed must be kept protected from the weather. This will usually mean that the feeders are placed inside the coop or house rather than out in the fly pen. Should any feed become moistened due to a sudden rain shower or other accident, it must be cleaned up immediately and removed from the area frequented by the birds.

Moldy grain is a source of much trouble and no pigeon should be expected to consume it. Containers or receptacles for storing feed supplies should always be made of metal and be kept tightly closed at all times. They should be protected so the weather will not damage the feed and the birds cannot contaminate it. They should also be located and covered so mice and rats cannot gain entry. Birds may refuse to eat grains over which mice or rats have been running.

Grit is to the pigeon what teeth are to people. Pigeons need a supply of small gravel or granite grit at all times. They will not consume very much but they need some. Also, a small amount of oyster shell or calcium carbonate is necessary for good egg shell formation. Do not confuse oyster shell and grit. They are both needed and for different purposes. Special pigeon grit and mineral mixtures can be purchased at feed stores or can be ordered by mail. A balanced mineral and grit mixture is very essential to the pigeon. Problems which can arise if adequate mineral is not provided are sterile eggs, poor hatchability, crippled squabs, soft-shelled eggs and others.

In small pigeon lofts and for the beginner, prepared mineral and grit mixtures are advised. In large lofts, concentrated mineral and trace element mixtures can be purchased. These mixed with correct proportions of fine gravel granite grit and oyster shell can lower the per pound cost of the grit mixture.

If a complete pigeon pellet ration is not being fed to your birds, add a slight amount of table salt to the granite grit and oyster shell. About one ounce of salt per five pounds of granite grit and oyster shell is sufficient.

Water is the cheapest part of the pigeon's diet. Make sure they have plenty of clean, fresh water at all times. Pigeons drink by swallowing as a person does and not by dipping their beak as chickens do. Therefore, you must make sure that water is at least ¾ inch deep at all times.

Wash and disinfect waterers at least once weekly to prevent disease.

## BANDING AND RECORD KEEPING

Banding for identification purposes is necessary in any pigeon breeding operation. A numbered band is to the pigeon what a social security number is to a person or an army serial number is to a soldier. It is a means of keeping records and identification so that you can give the pigeon a permanent name. Numbered identification bands are necessary when birds are to be exhibited and often aid in the recovery of stolen birds. Seamless aluminum bands bearing the current year (04, 05, 06, etc.) number, in addition to the regular recorded identification number, are often placed on the young bird at about 10 days of age. At this time the seamless band can be placed over the foot of the bird by extending the back toe up along the shank. After the band is placed over the foot and beyond the toe, it can be released and will remain on throughout the life of the bird as a permanent identification.

In addition to the seamless band, a colored celluloid ring with or without numbers is often used to identify mates and nest locations. These can be more easily observed than the small seamless bands. Also, for further simplification some breeders use one color bands on males and another color on females or green for one pair and red for another. Celluloid bands can be obtained with pairs of duplicate numbers to further aid in the record keeping process.

Good records are essential for every pigeon enterprise. One or more pages should be devoted to the records and pedigrees of the individual mated pairs. By keeping such a book and recording band numbers of each squab at the time it is banded, you can over the years develop a permanent record system where you know the parents of every bird and in turn can look up its offspring. These records are extremely valuable to the breeder who seeks to make definite color combinations and preserve certain family blood lines in his or her matings.



Pigeons offer very good material for genetic studies and investigations and these, too, require that accurate records of each individual bird, its parents and its offspring be kept.

The form at the bottom of this page is suggested as a chart for keeping breeding records.

## HOUSING AND EQUIPMENT

Pigeons can adapt to living under a variety of conditions. A pair of pigeons can be successfully housed in a box three feet square and equipped with a wire front. On the other extreme would be an elaborate building with covered fly pen. This too, is acceptable to pigeons. A good space rule is four square feet of pen and four square feet in the coop area for each breeding pair. More space, of course, does no harm.

Certain features are necessary for good pigeon quarters. These include:

- Waterer – clean, easily reached and protected from contamination.
- Feeders – clean, protected from weather and contamination. So arranged that the birds will not waste feed.
- Grit hopper – protected from weather and contamination. So arranged that the birds will not waste feed.

- Perches – at least one for each pair in the pen. Perches arranged so as not to be directly over each other where two or more are required.
- Nests – at least two for each pair and each equipped with a separate flight board or nest perch. Each nest should have a front to prevent the young from slipping from the nest.
- Roof – protection from rain, wind and snow is essential where pens are located entirely out-of-doors.
- Locks on doors – to prevent accidental release of birds, theft or disturbance by people or animals.
- Supply of nesting material.
- Provision for feed storage (moisture and rodent proof).

Any pigeon enclosure should provide security from predators, protection from rodents and all of the requirements for maintenance of health and the rearing of a family.

Separate pens should be provided for the developing young (after they leave the nest), unmated birds and mated pairs. Never leave unmated birds in the breeding pen.

## Breeding Record Chart

Year:		Pair Number:			Owner:		
Cock Number:		Color:			Sire:		Dam:
Hen Number:		Color:			Sire:		Dam:
Egg Number	Date Laid	Date Hatched	Date Banded	Band Number	Color	Sex	Remarks
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							



Arrange nest boxes so they can be easily cleaned. All nesting material and old nests should be removed once each year and burned. This should be done in the fall when pigeons normally molt (drop feathers) as very few young will be produced during this time. Many pigeon fanciers remove the nests and force the birds to rest during the winter months. This builds them up for the coming season. Also, young squabs produced during the winter often die from exposure and low temperature.

Good feed and water containers can be obtained from a local grocery store or bakery shop at low cost. (See Image 2.)

- One-pound coffee cans may become good feeders or waterers by the addition of covers and wire sides.
- Fruit juice cans (46-ounce) cans be “remodeled” into satisfactory feeders.
- Good feeders and waterers can be made from empty ½-gallon and one-gallon plastic jugs.

Causing pigeons to eat or drink through a partition in the pen is a good way to prevent roosting on and dirt in the containers.

For a suggested arrangement of a house and fly pen, see Image 3.

## DISEASES AND PARASITES

The following diseases and parasites are the ones that may plague the 4-H pigeon raiser:

“Canker” (trichomoniasis) – This is the deadly killer of young squabs at about two weeks of age. It is transmitted to the offspring by the parents who are carriers of the organisms but who are relatively unaffected by its presence in their systems. It shows up as a yellowish white pustule or crust in the throat of the young bird. This eventually grows large enough to close off the wind pipe opening and thereby produce suffocation. The treatment most widely used is the application of a mild astringent to the area of the bird’s throat

when it is noticed. Combine this with a prescribed dosage of Enheptin (trade name for 2-amino 5-nitro-thiazole) or Emtryl (trade name for 1, 2 Dimethyl-5-Nitroimidazole) to the affected birds. These may be given in feed, water or individually in measured capsules. Birds that are to be used for human food should be given no medication.

**Mites** – The common red mite of poultry is not usually a problem in the pigeon loft. It can be successfully controlled by any one of several methods should it be found in the nests or crevices of the living area. Saturation with kerosene or other petroleum derivatives or the spraying with solutions of malathion, carbaryl or other proven miticide will effectively rid the premises of this pest.

The black or northern fowl mite, however, is a more persistent individual because it spends all of its time upon the bird’s body. In contrast, the red mite lives in the crevices of the pigeon house and equipment during the day and moves onto the bird only at roosting time or when the bird is on the nest. The northern fowl mite can be controlled by an individual application of approved miticide dusts to each bird or by the application of one of the nicotine roost spreads directly to the feathers of each bird.

In the case of nicotine, care should be taken that the fluid does not come in contact with the bird’s skin as blistering will occur. When using nicotine sulphate products, it is desirable to apply them early in the day as the bird will often require large quantities of water following the use of this compound.

**Pigeon Lice** – Both feather and body lice do appear on pigeons and are relatively easy to control. The best method of control for the person who has only a small number of birds is individual application with a good commercial poultry louse powder. Follow instructions on the container. Examine the bird seven to 10 days later and repeat if the first treatment was not 100% effective. Insecticide sprays containing approved poultry insecticides can be used for the large loft and in this case the equipment, as well as the birds themselves, should be sprayed.

Image 2: Feeders and Waterers

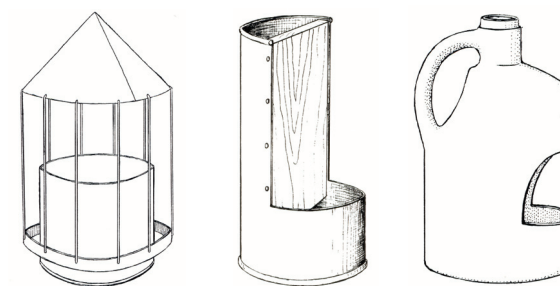


Image 3: House and Fly Pen

