

## Are Your Pigeons are too Heavy for the Race?

There is a saying that if you become a master at feeding pigeons you will become a master at racing pigeons. This is very simplified but the body weight going into the race is extremely important.

I would say over 75% of pigeons shipped to races are shipped too heavy. Many fanciers have their pigeons better prepared for a show than a race. Most are under the impression the pigeons should be round and full. This is completely wrong. A pigeon, even for long distance races should be light and buoyant with the muscles nearly lying flat. **In most cases how a pigeon handles when it finishes the race is how it should have handled when it started the race.** Just a tiny bit of fat will keep a pigeon flying for many hours. Combine this tiny bit of fat with super health, condition and you will see superb results.

Can a fat pigeon win a race? Sure a fat pigeon can win a race against fat pigeons. Lean pigeons are at a big advantage. Most like to send their pigeons big and full for the long distance. These big full pigeons will be beat by the properly prepared pigeons every time. When I talk lean I do not mean skinny.

Let us look at feeding. Pigeons that are trained very heavy will need more rich feed to sustain the perfect body weight. Pigeons that are trained efficiently and fed correctly can achieve the same fitness with much less road work. Pigeons also do not need rich feed for more than two feedings for a short race 300 miles and under. Pigeons need no more than four to five feedings of rich seeds for a long distance race. If you are shipping a 500 mile race on Thursday for a Saturday liberation, feed high fat seeds maybe one feeding Tuesday evening, two feedings Wednesday and a feeding on Thursday. You ask what makes up the majority of the feed the rest of the week? Good quality barley. This is barley that is plump and in the husk. Learn to use barley and save time on training and loads of money on gas.

For most of the week the pigeons should be fed 80% barley and maybe 20% racing mix. If you are racing on a Saturday for a race under 300 miles feed them all the rich seeds and racing mix (16% protein) they want on Thursday evening and maybe a half ration of feed on shipping day that is 50% barley 50% rich fatty seeds. The most important day to feed for a race is two days before liberation, not the day before.

You may asked how do I feed the pigeons upon return from any race? For 300 miles and below the pigeons return home to all the rich oily seeds (safflower etc) and racing mix (16% protein) they want. They get to eat this until dark then back to 80% barley the following day. **The most important meal after a big workout is the first meal, so let them eat.** For long distance races the pigeons are allowed to eat all the rich seeds and racing mix they want upon return and they also get to eat rich feed and racing mix the day after return. The following day it is back to 80% barley. Your pigeons will never blow out round and never get heavy after a big workout if fed like this. If your pigeons do blow up and feel like lead balloons a few days after a race, your feeding system has really missed the mark. McLaughlin Lofts pigeons never blow out and never get heavy after a race. It is all feeding because we do not like to train much.

Are there many roads to Rome with feeding? Sure there are. I want to keep it simple and by using a quality barley you can maintain weightless well conditioned pigeons without endless road work. Loft flying or

moderate road work will keep a correctly fed pigeon in great shape. Speaking of loft flying you will not believe how well the pigeons exercise on the 80% barley mix.

If you take away anything from this newsletter remember that you probably ship your pigeons much too heavy for the races. Pigeons for long distance races should **not** be full and round. Long distance pigeons are not flying south for the winter they are flying for 12 to 14 hours. Pigeons for races under six hours should be light as feather but not skinny, just buoyant with muscles lying flat not full. Even for headwind races a lean buoyant pigeon is at a big advantage. Try adopting this feed method for old birds and see body weight and condition like never before.

Until Next Time,

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