

Training

en index, follow tippler, flying tippler, pigeons, pigeon, training, rollers, Jan Van Stalle

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1 Why do we train ?

Tipplers like to fly but they also have to land on time; they might land at a place you don't like (roof of the neighbors, ..); moreover, the Dutch flying rules stipulate that landing outside an area of 65m from the loft leads to disqualification. They also might rest somewhere you don't see them and, instead of flying 6 hours, they have been sitting somewhere for a couple of hours; you also might lose birds when they fly into the night.

With training, we try to keep them flying and we learn to have them landed on the command of the fancier, not at the initiative of the bird.

2 How ?

The first part of the training consists of getting them in the loft at your signal; the fancier should take the initiative, not the pigeon. Here the feeding habits come in: we try to associate the time of feeding with a number of signals, in my case, this is:

- a fluorescent jacket which I only wear during feeding time
- a whistle
- the presence of droppers which are fed prior to the tipplers
- A yellow tray used to distribute the food

This only works when the pigeons are hungry; as droppers mostly white pigeons are used which do not fly very much, like fantails; I also use Canaria's for this purpose and I even used Birmingham rollers. By feeding time the droppers are released from their compartment and fed in the presence of the tipplers; only then the tipplers get their food on the yellow tray. This way, the tipplers associate food with the droppers and with the yellow tray.

I introduced the yellow tray in 2008; it proved to be very useful and the pigeons quickly respond to this tray when they see it.

When the tipplers are well trained on the signals the second part of the training is started: they should land on the roof of the loft when they are called. Needless to say that both the tipplers and the droppers should be very hungry. Calling them means: get the yellow jacket on, blow the whistle and get the hungry droppers out on the roof. The droppers will quickly respond on the few grains thrown to them and this will stimulate the tipplers to land. This might be difficult the first and second time, but after that things become easier.

All of this said, we still have to get the young birds out and flying. Not an easy job, as a young tippler is eager to fly but their navigational capacities are limited; this might result in loss of birds; getting young tipplers out and back on the loft after a flight might be a real nightmare ! they might get lost of flying with too much wind, or just fly into the night, or get caught by birds of prey. I lost a lot of birds the first time they got on the wing, and it is just a fact which you have to take into account when training young tipplers.

The preceding years my tippers got out on the age of 35 days, together with the droppers. They would sit on the roof and start flying at the age of 40 to 45 days. A problem with this method is the fact that you don't control the time of flying; they just go up and you might be in the neighborhood or not. Even worse, the young birds might go flying the first time they are on the roof because they got scared off by a noise or bird.

In an ideal situation, the birds should be between 40 and 50 days, very hungry, and you should be there to call them as soon as they go up. At that age, they have enough reserve to find back the loft if they get lost; you also have more time to train them on the droppers and you have more control.

In 2008 I applied to following protocol:

- At the age of 26 days training starts by putting them on the roof of the loft in a small aviary (each day). This goes on until the age of 40 - 50 days, depending on the weather conditions; ideally, the weather should be cloudy and no wind.
- The last three days before release they are kept very hungry; not more than 5 to 10 grams a day.
- Then they are released on the roof one by one, together with the droppers.
- Normally they will walk around on the roof.
- I release a Birmingham roller which start flying; this might be a signal for the tippler to go up. The important thing is that the tippler is not chased from the roof, but starts flying at his initiative by releasing another pigeon.
- After a while I try to call them back; this might succeed because they are very hungry; if you get them landed, you won a lot.
- This is the ideal scenario which is not always possible by lack of time, weather conditions etc.
- The days to come they are released in groups of 3 to 5 ideally, on a cloudy days. If there is a blue sky they tend to go very high and might get lost
- At this stage it is important to get them landed at your signal; so once they begin flying low, get the droppers out and try to call them down.
- If all goes well, they will fly 5 to 7 hours on a diet of 10 to 15 grams a day.

Once they know these habits training becomes more easy. It is also important to give them enough food between the training days because they still have to grow a lot.