

Len Vanderlinde QRPF Champion Flyer for 2014
From Scott Gray

Len Vanderlinde won the Qld Racing Pigeon Federation Champion Flyer award for 2014 with very consistent results from the start to the finish of the race season. I contacted Len and asked if he would agree to write down just how he pulled off the feat. Here then is his story....

In 2014 the young race birds were looking and acting great from the time I first put them over in the race loft. It was one of those years when everything was just right, healthy youngsters that seemed to breeze through all those early tests that every youngster faces as they learn their craft.

The peregrine was particularly bad in the early part of this year and took a toll on them as they started to fly and pack up, several were killed and a number of others injured. It seemed she had a real set on the loft. I knew it was the same falcon as she always followed the same attack pattern, usually ending up landing in a large gum tree some way off to catch her breath in the hot weather, before coming back again and again, particularly as the youngsters were making their way back after her initial attack. The attacks finally subsided towards the end of March and the birds breezed through their initial tossing and training.

When racing started in early May they were fit and rearing to go. By the end of the race season they had won the Cannon Hill club averages, the QRPF South Section, Open Federation, Overall Championship and the Short Distance Fed averages. A really top season, with two Open Federation wins, 15 top 5 Fed positions as well as 8 club wins. It doesn't get much better than that!

I started keeping racing pigeons as a boy growing up the NSW Northern Rivers town of Casino, which was a popular release point for the Sydney Federations in those early days. As boys we spent every spare hour during the winter months catching the many strays that stayed in the town after these releases. Come summer, and the wet season would see most of these birds die from what I now know was coccidiosis, brought on by the dirt floors in the chicken coops where most of us kept the birds.

My family left Casino in 1964 and moved to Brisbane. I took my birds with me and as a 15 year old joined the Qld Homing Society and raced with my father for a couple of years before giving them away to pursue the other activities of a young man.

In 1984 with a wife and young family I finally started back in the sport, which was never real far from my thoughts over the years. I re-joined the QHS and that same year I won my first club race and flew the birds out to 700 miles, all with just 32 race birds! I don't think I could do that today.

In 1987 I won my first QRPF Open Federation race when I clocked a very good yearling cock in from Cobar, 510 miles at 8pm on a very dark cold night in the middle of July. It remains today as one of the many highlights I can vividly recall of birds arriving home over the years. Over the next 17 years I continued to race with QHS winning numerous races and club championships.

In 2004 my wife Val and I moved to the eastern suburbs of Brisbane and I joined the strong Cannon Hill club. One rather unkind individual told me "I was racing with the big boys now and they would show me how it's done". I am pleased to say over the last 8 years I have won the Cannon Hill club championship 6 times. I have never been worried about competition. The better it is the harder you try.

The Birds:

My initial pigeons were based on the old Brisbane families, which were good at the distance races.



The cock I won Cobar with back in 1987 was from this line and a very small amount of that blood can be traced back in today's birds. Back in those early days we all thought that the short races were just a lottery. That is until 1990 when the imports arrived on our shores. What a difference they made, sure there were many poor birds among them, no different to any other line of pigeons, but when you got hold of the good ones they made a mockery of the lottery theory.

I purchased a Janssen cock in partnership with a friend at a Rangeview Stud sale back in 1991. He was an inbred cock based

on the long distance Dutch Janssens and I figured to mate him with the old family to get some speed in them. This I did, putting him with a Balfe hen that had bred a 500 mile Fed winner. I kept two cocks and a hen for stock from this mating. From one of the cocks, when he was mated with a Janssen hen from Rob Wilson, I bred QHS 98 555 BBW/FH.

I raced this hen for 3 years, she was clocked 10 ten times for several wins, pools & places, and she flew 650 miles as a yearling, she won champion and grand champion at a local pigeon show two years running and still I never put her into stock, Why, because I didn't want to breed pied back then (neither of her parents were pied).

In 1992 my wife and I travelled to Thailand to compete in an international race. We finished 5th and collected \$10,000 for our trouble, which was very pleasing. It was here that we met a number of interstate Australian fanciers, including Syd & Lesley Gard (CCF Champion Flyers for 2014) and a lifelong friendship developed between us.

In early 2000 we visited Syd & Lesley and I couldn't help noticing a smoky white flight youngster in his race loft. Something about this young cock caught my eye. To my amazement Syd told me he had a youngster for me to take back, and proceeded to catch the very youngster I had been admiring MBRA 99 559.



He was bred from a straight Staf van Reet hen from Riverview Stud mated with a straight Mueleman cock from Rangeview Stud, both acquired by Chris Fernandos (Sydney). These two pigeons I knew very well were top class. 559 developed into a magnificent Blue Pencil W/F stock cock. A colour that can found often among my birds to this day.

In 2002 I finally relented and put 555 into stock, I mated her with 559 and as they say the rest is history. In their first season they bred me 5 club winners and today nearly every bird in my loft, that I call my day birds, carry the bloodline of these two great pigeons. They remain today my foundation No.1 pair and I look to maintain this bloodline at all times. These pigeons will win for me at any distance and any velocity as long as they can get home on the day!

Over the years I have added crosses to the family but always breeding back to the base line, based on performance. Staf van Reets have been used, along with other Janssens and Muelemans with very good results, but by far the best cross has been the Gaby Vandenabeele birds.



A Gaby hen borrowed from Shaun Elliott, bred from UK Myrtle Loft Vandenabeeles', mated to an inbred son of my No.1 pair (triple winning daughter of the No.1 pair mated back to 559) produced a very good stock cock QPF 06 641 Blue Pencil, who when mated with QPF 05 12800, a Staf van Reet hen down from the Rangeview Stud RS1, 2 & 4 lines, bred my Mitchell 510 klm Open Fed winner and are the grand parents to numerous top placegetters. One son of theirs, QPF 08 8106 Dark Pencil was clocked late on the day after an all-day fly from 615 klms for 11th Open Fed @ 1051mpm and two weeks later from the same race point I clocked him again in the

middle of the day for 5th Fed @ 1771mpm. 8106 has bred many good birds including QPF 11 11085 Pencil W/F Cock who was clocked after dark at 6.26pm from a hard 680 klms Fed National (11 hour 41 minutes on the wing) to win the section and 8th Open fed, beaten by lofts flying 30 klms shorter and clocking during daylight. This same cock had earlier landed with the club winner from 150 klms, topping the Fed @ 1214mpm, and again at 220 klms winning the club and topping the Fed @ 1046mpm.



Another young Gaby cock bred by Shaun from his UK Myrtle Vandenabeeles, that Syd & I purchased at the QPF Expo Squeaker sale in 2006, was Blue Bar QPF 06 519. When mated with a Mueleman hen, he bred my Roma 440 klms YBD Open Fed winner. The

Expo Cock also left behind very good stock when mated with progeny of the No.1 pair, particularly Blue Bar Hen QPF 08 8112. She was mated with 8106 to breed 11085 and this year they bred Blue Pencil Pied Cock QPF 13 379, who I clocked just after dark at 6.04pm from 739 klms for 5th Open Fed at 1064mpm. I clocked 379 again from the 739 klm National two weeks later for 4th Open @ 1297mpm, finishing in a headwind and only beaten by 3 lofts 20 to 30 klms shorter.

Another son of 8106 x 8112 is Pencil Pied cock QPF 11 11026 that landed with his sister to win the club and top the Fed from 300 klms @ 1049mpm and again landed with his sister to finish 2nd Open Fed from a very hard 440 klms race @ 1008mpm, beaten into 2nd place by decimals. 11026 bred for me this year Blue Bar Pied Cock QPF 13 301 placed 2nd Open Fed from 565klms @ 1352mpm. His nest mate Blue Bar Pied Hen 302 was placed 6th Open from 739klms @ 1320mpm and clocked again from 1045klms at 2.45pm the second day for 7th Open @ 767mpm, only 20 clocks presented. I know this contradicts my "on the day" statement, but I had mated 11026 with a Burton Hansenne hen from Brian Daley that was related to his Townsville Open Fed winner, only bird to ever fly the 1080klm on the day, being clocked at 11.18pm at night.



It was Syd again who sent me a Koen Minderhoud Vandenabeele hen bred by Jack Vanderlinden. She has Minderhoud's best cock, the '103, a grandson of the Wittenbuik on both sides of her pedigree. I called her Keon 1. Mated with an inbred cock from the No.1 pair (double winning son of the pair mated back to 555), she bred me a club bird of the year on the hard North Blue Bar Pied Cock QPF 08 8091. He in turn bred my Morven 615klm Open Fed winner, when two birds hit the board together after a 9 hour 7 minutes, electronically timed 2 seconds apart to win the Fed @ 1123mpm. The other bird was bred from a granddaughter of the No.1 pair. I have 4 direct children of Koen 1 in the stock loft and several grandchildren, all of whom are producing for me.

Syd also sent me two youngsters he bred from a pair of Gaby's from Keith Saggars, a nice hen and a plain cock was how he described them. The Plain cock mated with a direct daughter of the No.1 pair (QPF 06 6041) bred me two Open Fed winners, plus an equal Fed winner. The Nice hen turned out to be a small cock and Syd wanted him back, so we swapped, he got the small cock back and I got the nest mate hen, who I called the Replacement Gaby. I mated her with 8091 the Bird of the Year to breed the Morven Open Fed winner above. The list goes on and on.

One small problem I find is the lack of recognition for equal Fed winners, sure I know what they have done and I guess that is enough. I use a Benzing M1 electronic clock and several times I would have preferred to clock a different bird when multiple birds have arrived, but it is the first on the board that gets the official recognition. For example this year I had three together to win the Bollon 560 klms Open Fed. Blue Bar Pied Hen QPF 12 12019 from the Plain Gaby cock to the daughter of No.1 pair,



took the honours, while a daughter and granddaughter of Koen 1 were 2nd & 3rd at the same velocity of 1442mpm.

12019 landed again with Blue Bar Hen QPF 12 12117 from St George 450 klms to win the Open Fed by 10 minutes. 12117 bred from 11085 (see above) and a granddaughter of Koen 1 by an inbred son of the No.1 pair taking the honours on this occasion. 12117 was also placed 3rd best in Fed at 140klms @ 2037mpm, 5th best in Fed at 270klms @ 1139mpm, 3rd best in Fed at 450 klms @ 1251mpm before she won

the Open Fed as above. 12019 not to be outdone was also 2nd best in Fed at 180 klms, 7th best in Fed at 560 klms as well as her 1st Open Fed 560 klm victory and of course she landed with 12117 to win the Fed by 10 minutes.

The Loft:

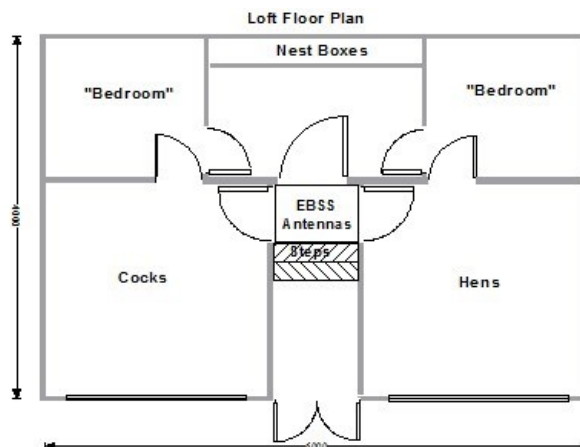
In 2000 I built a new race loft, rather different to most Australian pigeon lofts. It is 6m long by 4m wide, with 5 sections. Two large sections 2.4 x 2.4m are at the front of the loft, separated by a corridor, and another two smaller sections behind these. Between these two rear sections I have a

section with nest boxes that is 2.8m x 1.6m. There are 7 doors in the loft plus two main front entrance doors, which allow me to move the pigeons around the sections as needed for motivation. It has a high gable roof with plenty of air space above the birds.

The centre corridor, leading from the entrance doors, which the birds use to enter the loft, allows them to break to the left or right to enter their section.



Race Loft with trainer crates fitted to the front



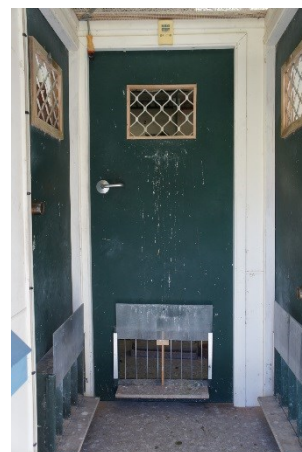
The birds can move freely from the front sections into the back sections, via small openings in the doors, which I can close off as needed. I call the smaller back sections the "bedrooms". Most of the birds will head for this section in the evening, and for a midday nap, it is their favourite place to relax, and from there they cannot see out, or anything else see in.

I can also allow them to move from their sections into the rear nest box section via the small openings in the bottom of the doors, which I allow them to do every Saturday and every time that they return from a toss or race. This is part of the reward I use to stimulate and motivate them to race home, I consider it a type of semi-widowhood.



Nest Box Section

The loft is a full 2.4m from floor to ceiling, but I have reduced this distance by installing a suspended floor about 500mm up from the main loft floor. There is a timber panel in the centre of each section floor, with wire mesh under all the perches. I only clean out under the wire mesh floor a couple of times per year, and firmly believe that the dry droppings, which accumulate under the mesh, helps to keep the loft nice and dry. While the timber panel in the middle, stops the feathers etc from flying up in the loft as the birds move around.



Entrance to the sections. EBSS under floor

It took a couple of years after I built the loft to get the ventilation just right. At first there was insufficient air moment to keep the birds healthy but the addition of the small chimneys under the floor with their electric fans and

opening up a 200mm section along the back at floor level fixed the problem. The system of electric fans under the loft floor can be set to automatically come on with a timer, as well as the special lighting that I have fitted, which is also on a timer. I brought the loft with us when we moved in 2004, it weighs 5 tonnes and it was no mean feat to shift it but well worth it!

The Management:

I mate-up my stock birds 55 to 60 days prior to the last race of the year. This ensures my first round of youngsters are ready to enter the racing loft on the weekend of the final race of that year.

I have never had much success with late-breds, and they interfere with my system, so I do not plan to breed any. Two rounds from the stock with all the young in the race loft well before Christmas, and ready for my off season routine is my aim. I breed approximately 100 to 110 youngsters to add to the 20 or so old birds that I like to carry over each year.

I do not treat my stock birds for anything other than lice and worms before breeding starts. I want the stock and the young to develop as much natural resistance to disease as possible.

I use Eprinex, a product registered as a cattle wormer, but also very good to treat pigeons for external parasites, such as lice, and I have not had any adverse reactions to its use in my birds. I do not find it is not much good for worms, but neither is the Moxidectin Plus that I also sometimes use. Avitol Plus I have found to be the best for worming the birds, but it is harsh on the stock and I don't use it every year.

I do prepare the stock for the breeding season by reducing their internal fat, I cut their feed rations and increase the amount of barley a couple of weeks prior to mating.

During the actual breeding season they are fed a varied mixture of grains, as many different grains as I can find, plus some pellets to try and ensure they have everything they need for healthy, well reared young. They also get all the usual pink minerals, various grits and pick stones. I also grow green feed, New Zealand and Indian spinach; that I try to give them as often as possible. In addition there is a pot of dun peas in front of them all day once they have young in the nest.

I also believe it is very important to have some dry droppings in the stock loft that the birds can pick through, which they certainly do. Pigeons are a flock bird, and I believe they pass their natural resistance to each new generation through the dry droppings. I have proved this theory to my satisfaction a number of times. It is possible to cure a loft of resident canker, by obtaining droppings from a loft that is normally canker free.

I separate the young into hens and cocks as I put them over in the race loft. This is an important requirement for my system. I want the birds to learn to break either to the left or the right, into the hen or cock sections, as they enter the loft through the corridor after exercise.

I am now in my off or moulting season.

The young are not medicated at all during this off season, except a treatment for lice and pigeon flies. I will dip all the birds in Coopex for pigeon flies, if they are a problem, to ensure the new feathers are not damaged by these blood suckers that can be a problem in the warmer months here in Brisbane.

I may treat the odd bird for canker if needed, but no mass medication program. Any bird that gets really sick, losing weight etc. will be disposed of. It is hard enough to win races with healthy birds, let alone sick ones, as I was told by a good mentor many years ago.

The youngsters when they come over to the race loft are fed very well, all they want, and again with a good variety of grains & seeds, plenty of grits, pink minerals and pick-stones.

Every Wednesday every bird in the yard, including the wild birds, get iodine in the drinking water, 6 to 8 drops of Sanichick per litre for the day. In the evening I give the race birds vitamins & minerals on their feed, moistened with a special oil that I make up. I do this 52 weeks of the year, to ensure it is part of their normal weekly routine.

I only let the young birds out of an evening, hens one day, cocks the next from October to January. This way I keep them under control and get them use to coming in when I call them to be fed as the sun goes down. I turn the loft lights on and feed them all they want before turning the lights off again up until February.

Between Christmas and New Year's Day the birds are vaccinated for pigeon pox and lately for PMV1. I also cut, and 10 to 14 days later pull the last flight during this time. I have tried cutting and pulling the last two flights, but I prefer doing just one flight, which allows the birds to stay more mobile.

Every effort is made to get the birds through the moult with a good set of feathers, too much work for the birds at this time only slows the moult in my opinion; they also get a bath out on the lawn as often as I can during this time. I also use garlic in the drinking water several days a week, and apple cider vinegar during wet weather, all through the off season.

The loft fans that I mentioned earlier, are set to run automatically for 15 minutes each hour during the day, all through the hot humid summer days.

I should also add that I attach my training crates to the front of the race loft during the off season, to allow the birds to come out and get more sun, and also to get them used to entering the crates. I can also teach them to eat & drink in these training crates.

In late January to early February I start letting them out in the morning and teaching them to trap. The hens will go out each morning and the cocks in the afternoon for one week, and then the roles are reversed.

They fly for as long or short as they want for the first couple of weeks, until I get the flag out and put them all up, and then take the flag down straight away. I am looking to achieve two things, firstly to get them to all go up together, and secondly to get them somewhat use to the flag.

I continue to feed them all they want to eat, but any birds that are slow to trap may not get anything to eat to teach them to enter the loft when I call them. I use a rattle to call them in.

The falcon can be very bad around the loft at this time of the year, as it was this year, and this can make it very hard for me to get them up and going. I am letting them out at about 5pm at this stage and will work back as the days get shorter and the weather gets cooler, until I have them out and working for 30 minutes and back in the loft before dark. In the morning they are out about 6.15am and called in about 7.15am

My racing season starts on the 1st weekend in May, and I want to start tossing the birds at least 6 weeks before this date. My aim so far has been to get the race birds through the moult. Get them use to the loft routine, the flag as a signal to work, and particularly the expectation that every Saturday they get to go into the rear nest box section.

Feeding has been all they want and out for exercise once per day up until now.

By late February I am looking to have the birds packed up and flying a little, but still separated, one lot out in the morning and the other in the evening for the first week or so. I put them all up with the flag, let them fly and come back down as they please, but with the loft locked-up. 15 to 30 minutes later I put them all back up again using the flag. I continue this until they are packed up and working on their own.

On the 20th March the day of the equinox, when there are equal amounts of light and dark, I turn the loft lights on to auto. These lights have special daylight tubes and simulate normal daylight.

Sundown in Brisbane on the shortest day of the year is about 5pm, so I set the lights to come on just before 5pm, and to go out in a staged manner from 7.15 to 7.30pm to give the birds time to find their perches. The lights stay on auto from now until the end of the race season, and the birds are fed after exercise in the morning, and in the evening at 6.15pm. It is really noticeable that birds fed after dark with the lights make no effort to perch until they are fed.

The lights also help the birds to complete a full moult of the flights as quickly as possible, by keeping the light at least 12 hours each day, and I find they stay more active throughout the race season with the extra light.

By the middle of March they are on the lights every day and are now let out altogether morning and night. I have roll up blinds fitted to the front of the loft and these are let down each night during the winter months, to keep the moisture out of the loft. The fans that were on auto during the summer months are now turned off. I may use the fans manually if needed during the race season.

The birds are now used to the flag and realise that when it is up, they stay up but come down as soon as the flag is lowered. I work the team for 30 minutes only; morning and evening. My birds work in a tight pack and tend to fly fast in straight runs, going about a 1 kilometre away and racing back.

The 10th flight that I pulled back in January was fully grown in 8 weeks and this gives them a very stable wing, which makes the job of getting them up and working much easier at this time of the year.

The birds mainly self-separate as they enter the loft, because that is what they have been used to during the off season. There are always a few that get it wrong and I use a tennis racket to get them over into their correct side. It is surprising how quickly they learn the routine, and I can have them all in, fed and separated in 10 minutes.

As soon as I have them up and flying freely for at least 30 minutes, and ranging a little, I start tossing them at short distances of 5 to 6klms, I am just looking to get them into the habit of going into the training crates, coming out at the release point, returning home quickly, and finding the nest box section open for them.

I use Google earth on the internet to determine the flight path from the first & second race point to my loft, and I look for toss points on this line of flight for the first 6 or 8 tosses.

As I said before they are allowed to mix freely in the nest box section every time they return from these tosses, and every Saturday.

I run the birds into the training crates, the same ones that were on the front of the loft all through the off season, to take them tossing. I have also taught them to eat in the crates by adding feed troughs to the back of the crates with small seed.

I look to get my young race team trained up to 100klms prior to the first race. At this stage I am now into my regular weekly race routine. Every bird that is well enough goes to a race or a 100 klm toss every Saturday. They are allowed in the nest section when they return and are well fed. I want every bird to spend a minimum of 1 hour on the wing from the toss and prefer an hour & half flight.

I am looking to have them fit and raring to go by Saturday each week, but certainly NOT in the early part of the week, and my efforts are therefore aimed at bringing them down in the early part of the week and lifting them up at the end.

I do this by firstly racing or tossing them on the Saturday and then reducing the quantity and quality of feed on Monday and Tuesday. After which they are very hungry, and I start to increase both the quantity and quality of feed from Tuesday or Wednesday, depending on whether we are basketing on the Thursday or Friday night.

They get more wheat and barley in the earlier part of the week, and more maize towards the end, plus some small seeds on basketing day just to top them off.

My aim, and it not always easy to achieve, is to create appetite in the birds early in the week, and to satisfy their hunger, so that they do not want any more to eat, by the afternoon of the basketing day, even though their crops are pretty much empty. When I get them like that and they handle with nice rounded "blown-up" breast muscles, I know they are ready to race for me. They now must use up that condition with a race or toss to bring them back down, and get them ready for the next week's preparation.

My basic race mix consists of 4 parts corn, 3 parts wheat, one part milo, 1 part Barley, 1 part peas and 1 part each of sunflower, safflower & pellets. I add barley to lighten the mix and more corn when needed. The corn ration is also increased during the race season, depending on what type of races we are experiencing, usually it gets up to 8 parts corn or double what I started with.

All these grains are cleaned, mixed and sun dried by me before use. I also make-up a small seed mix of equal parts canary & French white millet with rice, linseed, safflower & sunflower kernels added. They get this seed mix every Saturday & Sunday and a small amount as their last feed prior to basketing.

Just before the start of the race season I may start medicating my race birds, depending on how they are going, every year is different, and I try to change to suit what the birds are telling me through observation of their behaviour. I will treat them for coccidiosis, e-coli, canker & respiratory problems if required.

However once the race season is in full swing and the birds are going in the race crates and mixing with other birds, I start a regular medication program against canker & respiratory problems on a 3 week basis. I use the usual medications, Resfite, Triple X, Turbosole, Emtryl, Baycox & Sulpha AVS as needed etc

Grit and pink minerals are replaced every Saturday. On Sunday they are out together and given a bath and allowed to relax for an hour or two while still mixed together, after which they are called in, fed and separated.

It is hard to keep my pigeons at their peak for the entire race season, but by racing or training them every weekend, bringing them down in the early part of the week, before lifting them again as the next weekend approaches, as well as giving them preventive medication, I can get them through the season in very good form for most of the races.

I rarely toss them during the week, except perhaps in the lead up to a major race, but I have found that, if I have my birds in form they do not need the mid-week toss, in fact they perform less well when tossed during the week in many cases. Again it is something that changes from year to year or race to race depending on the response I get from the birds. A late afternoon toss can be a very good weapon to bring the birds on if that magical form is missing.

I race my pigeons in teams, on a fortnightly basis, but I don't hesitate to double a bird back if I notice it has come home from the previous race well, and has bloomed during the week; and I have had a lot of success with these double-back birds.

As I said earlier the birds get iodine in their water and the race birds' get oil and vitamins on their feed every Wednesday evening for 52 weeks of the year. I make up my own oil mixture, using a variety of oils that are available in most supermarkets or health food shops, I look for those that are particularly high in omega 3 & 6.

To this oil mixture I add crushed garlic, multivitamins, vitamin E and Co-enzyme Q10 and shake the lot together and store in the fridge. I add this oil to their grain and cover the lot with powdered minerals/vitamins before giving to the race birds. I have found that Wednesday is the key day of the week for me to give them this during the race season. I have also found that powdered minerals/vitamins on their feed are better for my birds than those added to the water.

Good quality feed is vitally important to me, but is not always easy to find. I try to have enough corn, wheat & milo in store for the entire season.

I use a lot of maize during the race season and I usually buy my feed in bulk from the grain silos, and as stated; I clean the grain very well before mixing and sun drying it and then storing in my feed bins. It is a lot of work but I think it is worth it.

I will worm the race birds out around about the 350 klm stage, just before we get to the Thursday night basketing. I use Avitrol Plus at this stage, which is harsh on the birds and takes them down a bit, but of course they come back up even better, just as the good middle distance races are starting.

Every race season and race team are different and therefore I will make small changes to the system, mainly with the medication program, tossing and of course feeding. Feeding is without doubt one of the most important components of my system, if I can master the feeding, I know I will have a good season.

Well that's about it, I think I have pretty much covered all that I do with my pigeons, but as I said, not every year is the same and I make small but necessary changes to the system to suit.

I have tried to be open and honest in explaining my system. I hope that the information provided maybe of use to other fanciers, particularly the new comers and those that are perhaps not as successful as they would like to be.

Epitaph.

555 my foundation hen escaped in 2009 when she flew against the loft door as I was opening it. She hung around for the rest of the day before heading off, no doubt going back to the loft location that she raced to all those years ago, I never seen her again!. 559 is still alive today, although he is no longer is fertile. He will spend the last of his days at my loft, he has earned it!

Len Vanderlinde October 2014