

## Bob Holloway QRPF Champion Flyer 2009

By Len Vanderlinde Dec 2009



Bob Holloway flying with the Queensland Racing Pigeon Federation had, by any description a top year. Winning four Open Federation races is a sure sign of a champion and rewardingly he took out the Champion Flyer award. As if this wasn't enough he also bred and raced the QRPF Bird of the Year. A lovely blue hen QPF 07 15443, she won an Open Federation race at 615 klms and backed up a couple of weeks later to win 2<sup>nd</sup> Open Fed at 670 klms. Bob didn't have it all his own way during the year, a good battle was fought with his club mate and friend Craig English, who finished 3<sup>rd</sup> in the averages. Craig with his Houben/Thoné birds and Bob with his Busschaerts and Aussie distance birds were running

pretty much one/two in the averages for most of the year.

Bob, who was born and bred at Wyong on the NSW central Coast, moved to in 2002 to Burpengary, part of the greater Brisbane area, situated approximately 30 klms north of Brisbane city. Kevin Smith & Margaret Sales had started him in pigeon racing as a young lad in Wyong. Having met these two while playing football he was soon keeping a few birds and putting a couple into races under their name just as an interest. His first real races were flown with the Wyong Pigeon Club in the Central Coast Federation along with his good mate Peter Esser. Good early results, racing from an old greyhound box converted into a pigeon loft, saw him winning a couple of good races, including the Young Bird Derby,.



In 1981 he married Margaret and they settled down on a property in Wyong. Margaret stayed home to raise their 3 daughters and proved to be a very competent fancier. She trained the birds for 17 years while Bob was at work and they enjoyed a great deal of success during this period. In fact Bob stated that, in his opinion women make the best fanciers, they are more patient than men and the birds can sense this and they respond accordingly. Mind you, now that Margaret is back working Bob is training the birds pretty much on his own and the results have not been too bad either!

Bob's original birds were purchased at a clearance sale of K Fenton from the South Coast Federation. Stuart Saywell helped Bob select and purchase 5 pair of the key birds at this sale and they have played a big part in Bob's success to this day in the long distance & hard day races. Several crosses were tried with these original birds but without much success until 1999 when several birds were purchased from Trevor Stead. These birds, including Stead's '747' line crossed well with the old Fenton line and have produced many winners, including the QRPF bird of the year 2009.

In 1993 Bob flew over to Western Australia to purchase some Busschaerts from Ian Daniel's Rangeview stud. These Busschaerts from the *Twicemal* line have now been developed into Bob's sprint family and again have produced many winners at Federation level up to the 400 mile mark. *Twicemal*, a blue chequered cock GB 83R 20416 was placed 1<sup>st</sup> Amal Gloucester against 6,103 birds and also 1<sup>st</sup> Amal Gloucester against 6,295 birds as well as 14<sup>th</sup> Amal Dorchester 5,328 birds. Obviously *Twicemal* was a great champion whose winning genes are flowing through to Bob's sprint family to this day.

In 2005 some more birds were purchased from Keith Wrightson of Central Cumberland Federation fame, these have also crossed in well with the distance family. The names Stead & Wrightson are champions in the sport of pigeon racing and Bob greatly appreciates getting hold of their birds and the friendship of these two great men.



Bob had recently built a new race loft at Wyong just prior to the shift to Brisbane and so it was decided to dismantle this loft and relocate it to their new home in Burpengary. The loft is 14m long by 2.7m deep with an open front and overhanging flat roof to keep out the weather. The loft faces NE and gets a lot of sun, particularly during the race season which Bob, along with fresh air, considers a vitally important part of his successful management. The loft is fully insulated, both under the roof and in the walls, which are lined with fibro sheeting. The race loft is divided into 6 sections plus two open door trapping sections. Two sections are for the sprint & distance cocks, another two for the sprint hens and the final two for the distance hens. The race loft is cleaned at 5.15am six days a week before Bob starts work.



The stock loft is a separate building 8m long by 5m wide with a brick base set on a concrete slab that allows Bob to simply hose it out once per week, which the stock birds absolutely love. In fact they are all down on the floor waiting when they see Bob approaching with the garden hose. Usually 15 to 17 pair of stock are mated each year along with 4 pair of current race birds. This gives Bob the 60 or so young that adds to the usual 40 or so old birds that go to make his race team for the year. Breeding is usually started in September and finishes well before Christmas

The race birds are trained in the morning at day break; hens and cocks out together but are separated after exercising. The birds are trained to a flag system, a system that some say is wrong because you are 'scaring' the birds, but this is not the case at all. Once the birds are use to the flag they use it as a sign, when to stay up working and when to come down for feeding. Bob likes to get the birds fit by exercising them around the loft for 30 to 90 minutes as required. They are tossed once or twice a week from 20 to 80 klms, again depending on what Bob thinks they need for the forthcoming race. Loft work for fitness and tossing to educate and make them use their brains is Bob's motto and who can argue with such great results.

Feed is purchased from local Brisbane suppliers or usually by buying in bulk from JM Produce in Sydney and getting it shipped up to Brisbane by the pallet full, enough for six months. The separate grains, consisting of wheat, peas, maize and sunflower are purchased and mixed together according to what the birds require during the race season. Bob is also a heavy feeder of green food, giving his race birds' greens such as spinach 4 or 5 days of the week and virtually every day for the stock when they are breeding. He doesn't believe in leaving grit or pink minerals in the loft overnight, too risky he thinks, preferring to hand feed them grit as required and giving vitamins in the drinking water. His loft is too sunny for pink minerals, which he believes are rendered useless by sunlight. He prefers using the imported mineral grit for greater variety.

*"Air & sun are the best medications and these are free"*, he stated. In the early years Bob had a cupboard full of medications which he found really solved nothing. Good class pigeons housed in a well ventilated and sunny loft don't require much in the way of medication, medication does not make them fly faster, and it is only a bandaid that doesn't treat the real cause of the problem. Canker and respiratory in the race birds will be treated at the start of the race season only or if a problem should arise after the birds mix



with others in the race crates. Bob particularly wants his young birds exposed to the loft environment without any medications to allow them to develop their natural immune systems.

Bob has a number of interests outside pigeons, these include race horses, which he has owned and trained, following in his father's footsteps, who owns a horse stud in the Wyong area. His other passion, other than his family and particularly his two grandkids, is fishing. He takes every available opportunity to get away and do some fishing. In fact I had to wait 4 weeks until he got back from a fishing trip to get an interview with him for this article. His other great like is to "***beat the Maroons at anything***". *Authors note: luckily this doesn't happen too often < grin>.*

Bob has strong views on the sport and would like to see more sponsorship to try and reduce the cost but he also recognises that we don't have a strong public image to attract these sponsors. The social side of the sport is also considered important and helps to promote camaraderie amongst people with a similar interest. He particularly dislikes those with their own personal agendas, which are destroying the sport; it can only survive with strong support of all interested fanciers pulling together.



Light cheq hen NRC 08 4422 who was placed 1<sup>st</sup> club, 1<sup>st</sup> section, 1<sup>st</sup> Open Fed Mackay 820 klms 1046 birds. She is bred from the old long distance lines, particularly the Fenton/Stead cross.



Blue cheq hen QPF 06 9889 who was placed 1<sup>st</sup> club, 1<sup>st</sup> Section, 1<sup>st</sup> Open Fed Marlborough 615 klms 1642 birds. She is bred from the *Twicemal* Busschaert lines.

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