

SUCCESSFUL BREEDING OF INDIAN FANTAIL PIGEONS

This article will focus on the physical setup to compliment this unique breed of pigeon as well as leading through the breeding season.

General breed characteristics of Indians would be as follows; they are a larger breed than many and they do not tend to be flighty. They are generally very good parents, although as with any breed it is a trait that you breed for. They are birds that primarily roost near the lower levels of a pen but I have had birds that roosted as high as any breed. They are docile, again a trait that is bred for, so they fit well with other breeds in the same pen.

My Indians share pens with flying, flighty Birmingham Rollers and Voorburg Croppers. The Rollers roost primarily high on box perches. The Voorburgs roost in the middle zone on V perches. The Indians generally roost on or near the floor. My box and V perches are deep and larger than many to catch droppings as much as possible. The Indians use bricks turned on their side spaced out from the walls, away from the higher perches. Some of the birds will also roost on V perches if they are lower on the walls. The floors are covered with a couple of inches of pine shavings that are changed as required. The shavings tend to fly around with the other breeds in the same pens but with the heavy muffs on the Indians they work well to keep the feathers clean. If you choose wire floors as some breeders do you just have to keep in mind that there will be more show prep required for the birds.

During breeding season most perches are removed from the breeding pens to encourage birds to roost at their nest box. Some breeders use individual boxes for their birds. Because of the size of the birds boxes around 3' wide, 18" high and 24" deep are about the minimum size required. My open nest boxes are 32" wide, 18" high and 22" deep and work well. Nest bowls are large; I use the bottom of 5 gallon pails that are cut 3" high, filled with shavings with good results. I have also used 2 bricks to form a corner in the rear of the box with good results but it is harder to keep clean.

Young birds take longer to develop to the point of getting out of the nest as they are larger and have many long feathers that have to grow out before they slow down their growth. They can be kept with the parents longer than with some breeds to ensure that they are eating on their own before they are moved to a separate pens. A point to remember when culling birds is that Indians will continue to grow and develop well into their second year. Many good birds have been culled simply because they were late bred and did not look as strong as the early bred birds. As long as young birds have the proper "parts" then the longer you can keep them the better you will make the right choices for breeding. One other note regarding young birds is that once the tail feathers have fully grown out and hardened and the young bird is in good form healthwise you can pull the entire tail. This is best done by holding the bird firmly in one hand and with that same hand pinching the skin where the feather joins the body. Then with the other hand a quick pull of the feather will remove it without damaging the skin. Once you pull an entire tail, one feather at a time, it is imperative that the bird gets a high protein diet to assist in developing 30 plus new tail feathers for at least 10 weeks while they grow in and harden. The new tail feathers will be broader and longer, more to the dimensions of a mature tail. The tail is generally a fuller circle as well. A young bird with its second tail will give you a better idea of its value and will be ready for showing. You can also follow this procedure for muffs and flights as well. This same process can be used with old birds once they are finished breeding as long as they have had a rest period and are in good shape physically. Birds in poor condition, young or old, should not have mass amounts of feathers pulled due to the stress of growing the new feathers.

When showing Indians they need to stand erect, alert and calm. Wild birds will not show their true traits and will not win in shows. Most Indians are fairly calm by nature but all of them should spend same time in large judging cages with the breeders simulating a judging process by using a judging stick, wearing a white judging coat and possibly having distractions around similar to a show setting. Birds that are comfortable in this setting will compete well in shows.

I will discuss mating up pairs to produce quality young birds in the next article and show prep and the standard in article's following that.

The Canadian Indian Fantail Club is the national club promoting this breed of pigeons. The club has many knowledgeable members who are only too willing to assist new breeders with birds and advise. If you are looking to add another breed to your hobby Indian Fantails are a great choice.