

The Pigeon Genetics Newsletter, News, Views & Comments. The Pigeon Genetics Newsletter, News, Views & Comments.

(Founded by Dr. Willard .F. Hollander)

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This Issue our Topic is **"Size Doesn't Matter , or Does It!?"**

When we look at the examples of the Wild Rock Pigeons and the Feral Pigeons of the various Countries around the World , one thing that is quite consistent is that of size. The birds are all of what is generally considered a 'medium' size . The wild species are usually on the smaller side of medium compared to the Feral species. The typical "WILD TYPE" is a bird that has absolutely no feather Ornaments , no colour mutations, and no abnormal size differences or physical anomalies.

Below is a typical "Wild Type" Feral Pigeon of North America.



All of his characteristics have evolved as a result of "NATURAL" Selection. The factors that applied this selection were "Environmental" , that is to say, everything that naturally affected his ancestors in the way of Predation, Food and grit supply, Nesting sites, Temperature, Sunlight , available Water, Parasites, Diseases, his ability to mingle with Humans and his ability to Forage for whatever he needs to survive as a species.

It is interesting to note that SIZE varies in all Pigeons including within any given Species or Breed. You will often hear people speak of "the runt" of the litter or the runt in a nest box. Also interesting is that the female Pigeon is often the smaller in any given clutch of two eggs. We can actually make selection decisions with the eggs before hatching. Pigeon eggs are usually oval in shape , but can be very round or have one end quite pointed. My Grandmother used to select all of the round Poultry eggs for setting as she said they WILL be females (poulets) , whereas pointed eggs will be Cocks (males). I found this to also apply to Pigeons. However the large oblong (oval) shaped eggs offered a challenge. Quite often they produced the strongest large female offspring and two females per nest. These eggs must be studied very carefully to avoid errors as some will still be male..

Now we have to carry that selection further. The largest healthiest youngsters ONLY must be chosen to breed on. This cannot be affected by colour , cuteness, or temperament. If you want BIGGER and STRONGER, then that is what you must select to get. That can be overall size or for a specific area of each bird. The Breeds of Pigeons referred to as "RUNTS" and "RUMBLERS" were developed by careful selection from various crosses to obtain overall large size and appropriate type in well blended proportions. The Hubbel was similarly selected but specifically for much larger Breast meat on either side of the keel. The rest of the bird was kept to a basic wild type and size. The proportions therefore are quite extreme.

The question that arises is : What took place in order to have much larger birds produced. No doubt a gradual selection of birds that showed a slightly larger body size. This could have taken place in a number of other established Breeds and then various crosses would have been tried. Just as with other species bred for human consumption, emphasis would have been on the size of the Breasts and upper legs to produce the greatest amount of meat at a very early age thus referred to as 'squabs'..

There is quite a number of larger Meat Breeds from around the world. Levi lists the following 'squabbing' Breeds: **American Giant Homer., Auto-sexing King.,Auto-sexing Texan Pioneer., Carneau., Coburg Lark., Fat Shan Blue., French Mondain., Mondain.,Piacentino., Shack Kee., Sottabanca., Squabbing Homer., Swiss Mondaine., Utility King.**

Other large Breeds were not listed as Utility Meat Breeds despite their size because their ability to reproduce in large quantities was not adequate to be economically viable as an industry. Breeds such as the Runts , the Rumbler, are among the very largest , but fertility and ability to successfully breed and raise their own young is seriously impeded by their cumbersome size.

None of the squabbing Breeds listed above actually offered the sort of large breast muscle that was desired for a commercially viable Breed , so a new Breed was developed and named the **Hubbel** . There is a Facebook Group devoted to this Breed called :

[Pigeons "Géants HUBBEL XL Élites" /colorés / potentiels couples très élevés](#)

This is third generation of my miniature naked neck project. Just to give some proportion to how the project is progressing. Statistically 1/2 Naked neck, 1/4 Portuguese, 1/4 Vienna mft and selected for size. This baby is flying about the loft, but still taking feed from the parents. They are just like the VMFT's on the wing, amazingly agile, and they are the tamest birds I've been around.

Been fun playing with Nn. It is an extremely variable autosomal dominant. Feathers break off as the bird matures. Heterozygous frequently grow feathers normal and then lose just the feathers in the back. This mutant only expresses when red or pheomelanin pigment is present. Eumelanin or black pigment somehow inhibits this mutants expression. Another peculiarity of this project, normal Romanian Naked Necks have at least 14 tail feathers. Portuguese and Vienna's have 12. So far, every RNN X VMFT has 14 tail feathers(5 babies). Every RNN X Portuguese has 12 tail feathers(11 babies). Things that make you go hummmmm... [Archeopteryx Aviary](#)



Levi made a similar comparison when he published the Book Encyclopedia of Pigeon Breeds with this photo:



Obviously size does matter when one checks the written standards for each and every Breed . There are distinct weights given for Young birds and old birds in both genders.

However the purpose of this Month's topic was to deal in particular with the "Commercial Meat Breeds of Pigeons that are raised for squabs. This is a topic many do not like to hear about , but even show Breed fanciers cull birds and often eat them rather than waste the meat.

As we mentioned earlier birds with white feathers usually do have white or light coloured meat and they are preferred to those that have dark meat because the dark meat is somewhat stronger in flavour . I personally have never eaten Pigeon meat so cannot vouch for that one way or the other. I did try the eggs but found that they did not turn white like poultry eggs and were somewhat more like rubber in texture. That may have been the cook , not the egg.

The Utility King has long been the choice for the meat market. However the Texan Pioneer also gained favour and it is my understanding that it lead to the creation of the Hubbel Pigeon. This rather "Hen Type" Breed was selectively bred for large breasts of very tender white meat.



Photo from Levi. This Breed originated in the US., by crossing the Dutchess, the Homer, the Maltese, and the Runt. The whites originated in the State of New Jersey. Old birds 30 to 37 ounces, Young birds 28 to 34.



The auto sexing King was created about 1940 at the Palmeto Pigeon Plant in Sumter South Carolina US. Breeds used were: Silver Utility Kings into which the auto-sexing gene was introduced. This enabled sexing of the squabs early in the nest.

Below is a photo of a pair of what I believe are "Hubble" Pigeons as I am not familiar with this Breed . They belong to Breeder Md Khan. I asked permission to post his photo but I see that he did not check his chat inbox so did not reply. I took a chance that he would not object to us using this photo here. You can see the tremendous depth and full breast conformation of these birds. I could not get any info on the ancestry nor the size /weight range.



Below is a Majorcan Bort Runt on the Spanish Island of Majorca. dark meat Cocks 25 oz., hens 21. The size was lost by crossing Giant Mallorquina to homers or Mondains .



Recessive Red American Giant Runt. It is suspected that the origin was Spain with Italian birds crossed in particularly via England then exported to the US. The Breed was used in the creation of the King Pigeons and possibly other large Breeds. Today there is also "Rumbler" that has been bred from Runt and Short Faced Clean Legged Tumblers for show purposes.



The Runt Breed is bred in most all colours now and the size of some is quite amazing. The type has also been changed over the years to make it more competitive in the show rooms of the US and Canada. The disadvantage of the size is that fertility is low and they have difficulty setting their eggs without cracking them and also often fail to be able to care for their own young. This is even more so a problem for the Rumlbers.

Foster parents and hand-feeding can solve some of the problems as with many show Breeds. Fertility can be helped by feather trimming, but just the fact that some of these birds even have problems flying means that they cannot tread the females properly.

A Silver Runt - I expect incorrectly labelled brown-Barred silver , since the two colours are not possible on the same bird , and this does appear to be a dilute Blue/Black series bird. Some Breeders call silvers as Dun Barred.



Below is a female Auto-Sexing Texan Pioneer developed in Houston Texas U.S. by crossing Ash-Red French Mondains and Auto - Sexing Kings from the Palmetto Pigeon Plant about 1950. The name 'Pioneer; was not added until 1959.



The "Faded" gene is an allele at the (St) locus so has the symbol (St^F). The cock birds are quite white with scattered flecking around the neck region in particular.

At this point , my camera downloads stopped working and I was unable to figure out what went wrong. I have added a photo of the Show King that I had already downloaded.

The remaining last two pages of the Newsletter I will just add some topics that you have asked me about recently that have nothing to do with the SIZE Topic in Pigeons . I apologise for this problem.

It seems that this Issue was not meant to go out as I have had one set back after another and thus it is late as well. On top of all of this I have been told by my Doctor that I have a disc out of place in my spine that is causing me all of the recent pain, and to make things more interesting , I spent all of last night until 8:00 this morning in Atrial Fibrillation -- getting old can be fun!



The Show King is a popular Breed today in the Show Rooms of most Countries. They are not bred for commercial Meat purposes, but some breeders probably do eat culls rather than waste the meat. They are bred is just about all self pattern and solid colour mutants . Pied patterns are not commonly seen in the Breed.

Now on another topic : I was asked why the Lahore Pigeon has white boots when its flights are coloured. My answer was that Dr. Lester .P. Gibson described Pied traits as being either White on Colour or color on white. If you have the issues that we did quite some time ago where I showed charts of all of the Pied Designs, you can see that there is a relationship between white flights and muffs , and coloured flights and muffs in most all Pied Designs . There is however an exception that stand out and of course that is the Lahore Pigeon . Usually if there is a white underbelly along with white flights then the muffs will be white . But that does not help us understand the Lahore either. In the case of the Gazzi Design and the Swallow Design we also have coloured flights, the muffs on the Swallow are coloured despite a white underbelly and in the case of the Gazzi it will show some coloured feathers around the top of the tarsus and if the feathers run down to create boots then they will be either coloured or mixed. So in the case of the Lahore I can only surmise that the reason we do not bet the matching flights and muffs is

that there are no colour flighted ancestors in the creation of the Lahore Design. There is a saddle design, a colour capped design, a bellneck design but nothing with coloured flights other than it seems , a solid white bird that was selected for coloured flights. Repeated selection for white underbody and white muffs probably bred out any coloured muffs , and likewise any white flights as Lahores occasionally will produce a recessive white flighted youngster.

If anyone has any other thoughts regarding this topic we would love to hear it.



I have painted all of the diagrams correctly except for the top first three in the Gazzi Chart where I neglected to show a slight black line at the top of the leg tarsus.



Well folks that is it for May. In June we will see what trouble we can get into in dealing with the Subject of "WILD TYPE".

Then in July Hein Van Grouw returns with his second edition of Colour Mutants of the Ring Necked Dove.

Sorry for filling this Issue wit extra large photos most of which you probably have already seen many times in the Encyclopedia of Pigeon Breeds by Wendell Levi. I had hope to have input but I can understand that people are busy and also may not speak English as a first language so may not have understood what I was requesting nor how to respond.

Hope you all will have a Great summer despite all of the terrible confusion and horrible things that are being done in many parts of our tiny Planet. It must be horrific for the Children, and their Parents to have their meager lives totally destroyed by a handful of greedy rich dictators with no sign of hope or relief in sight!