



THE AUSTRALIAN PIGEON CENTRE

“Where Passion takes Flight”

How has Pigeon Racing changed over the last 100 years?

By Barry Trewin

Over the last 100 years, pigeon racing has undergone significant changes, both in terms of its popularity and the technology used. Here are some key ways in which pigeon racing has evolved:

1. **Communication Technology:** The most significant change in pigeon racing has been the advancement of communication technology. In the past, homing pigeons carried messages during wars and emergencies, but today, electronic timing systems are used to measure race times accurately. These systems use RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) or GPS (Global Positioning System) to track the birds' performance and determine winners.
2. **Breeding and Selection:** Pigeon breeders have become more focused on breeding pigeons for racing abilities. Over the years, selective breeding techniques have been refined to enhance speed, endurance, navigation skills, and homing instincts in pigeons. This has led to the development of specialised racing pigeon breeds that excel in different race distances.
3. **Training Methods:** Training methods have evolved significantly to prepare pigeons for races. While traditional methods involved gradually increasing the distance from the loft, modern trainers also utilise methods like tossing and road training. These techniques help the pigeons develop navigation skills, strength, and stamina to perform well in long-distance races.
4. **Health and Nutrition:** Understanding the importance of health and nutrition has become paramount in pigeon racing. Advances in avian medicine and nutrition have led to better care for racing pigeons, with improved diets and preventative health measures. This has helped reduce the risk of diseases and increase the overall well-being of the birds.
5. **International Competitions:** Pigeon racing has become a global sport, with the rise of international competitions and organisations. The development of transportation infrastructure, such as airplanes and specialised transport services, has made it easier to organise and participate in races across continents. This has brought together pigeon enthusiasts from different countries, promoting cultural exchange and healthy competition.
6. **Social and Technological Influence:** Pigeon racing has embraced technological advancements, such as online platforms and social media, to connect breeders, racers, and fans worldwide. These platforms allow for sharing race results, discussing breeding techniques, and organising virtual races. Social media has also contributed to raising awareness about the sport and attracting new enthusiasts.

7. In the early years the pigeons would be transported via train to a location and the Station Master would release the pigeons at a designated time, now pigeons in larger organisations are transported in state of the art Semi-Trailers with various comforts for their journey to the release point and smaller clubs use smaller trucks and trailers which in essence still have the pigeon's arrive at release points quicker and allow for the pigeons to receive water and food (food depending on the distance and travel time to the release point) prior to release. The Transports now are able to stop at intervals on their way to the release point and ensure the pigeons receive water breaks, whereas back in the old days the pigeons where not given this opportunity while travelling on the train.

Overall, pigeon racing has transformed from a practical means of communication to a competitive sport that emphasises breeding, training, and technology. The sport has adapted to modern times while still maintaining its roots in the centuries-old partnership between humans and pigeons.

How can Pigeon Keeping be attractive in our society?

To make pigeon keeping attractive in a society dominated by social media and modern activities, it's important to highlight the unique aspects and benefits of this traditional home activity. Here are some ways to make pigeon keeping appealing:

1. **Educational and Historical Significance:** Emphasise the educational value of pigeon keeping. Pigeons have played significant roles in history, from delivering messages during wars to being symbols of peace and freedom. Highlighting the historical context and the intelligence of pigeons can engage individuals interested in learning about the past.
2. **Connection with Nature:** Pigeon keeping provides an opportunity to connect with nature and experience the joy of caring for living creatures. It offers a break from the digital world and allows individuals to appreciate the beauty of birds and their natural behaviours. Promote the therapeutic benefits of spending time outdoors and observing the fascinating habits of pigeons.
3. **Community and Social Interaction:** Pigeon keeping can foster a sense of community. Encourage local clubs or associations where pigeon enthusiasts can meet, exchange knowledge, and participate in friendly competitions. Organise events, exhibitions, or races that bring people together and allow them to share their experiences, fostering social interaction and a sense of belonging.
4. **Competitive Spirit:** Highlight the competitive aspect of pigeon racing. Many people are naturally drawn to challenges and competitions. Promote the excitement of training and racing pigeons, showcasing the skills required to raise and nurture top-performing birds. Organise local races or collaborate with existing racing clubs to encourage healthy competition and camaraderie.
5. **Technological Integration:** Integrate technology into pigeon keeping to attract individuals who are more inclined towards digital activities. Develop apps or online platforms that allow pigeon enthusiasts to track their birds' performance, share results, and connect with other breeders and racers. This fusion of traditional activities with modern technology can bridge the gap and appeal to a broader audience.

6. **Educational Programs and Workshops:** Conduct educational programs and workshops to teach the art of pigeon keeping to younger generations. Collaborate with schools or community organisations to introduce children to the hobby, focusing on its educational aspects, responsibility, and compassion for animals. By instilling an early interest, pigeon keeping can compete with social media for attention and become a rewarding pastime.
7. **Promote Sustainability and Conservation:** Pigeon keeping can be positioned as a way to contribute to conservation efforts and biodiversity. Emphasise the role of pigeons in preserving genetic diversity and their importance in ecological balance. Promote responsible breeding practices and raise awareness about the conservation challenges faced by pigeons and other avian species.

National Pigeon Bodies should be tasked to tackle issues with declining memberships and fanciers, a more interest in attracting people to the sport and showing pigeons.

By highlighting the educational, social, competitive, and environmental aspects of pigeon keeping, it can be made appealing to individuals who are attracted to social media and modern activities. Creating a sense of community, integrating technology, and showcasing the unique attributes of pigeons will help attract new enthusiasts and ensure the preservation of this traditional home activity.