

# **AHA Bulletin**

## **Questions and Answers Section Summary**

**Up to December, 1998**

Compiled by: Robert Bollinger 12/26/98

**Question:**

- What do you consider to be the most challenging single trait to perfect or improve on the helmet? Why?

**Responses:**

**Bob Dunlop;**

- The beak. Getting rid of the stained beak and beak setting. I've been working at that ever since I can remember.

**John Heppner;**

- Beak setting is number 1. But proper tight feathering in the crest and rosette are also challenging. Its difficult to get the tight feather that's very well packed to give the full and thick appearance.

**Hank Ebbelaar;**

- Style, type and size. For the most part our birds are too big and they stand like ducks.

**Mike Crawford;**

- Without sounding totally fixated on one thing, I'd have to say head power. It seems that there is not a lot of birds out there with great head power. There are some cocks that give the impression of power, but they don't seem to breed true. The real treasure is to find a powerful hen, and they are very rare.

**Victor Cardillo;**

- Type: This is something our birds once had. Without good type, the birds are not balanced. Many of our top winners in shows stand flat footed. This is a trait that is

overlooked by the judges, however picked up by the people watching the judging. Very few judges will take the time to take a few steps back and look over the birds. The ones that have type will be showing. No other breed of pigeon has tolerated lack of type as the helmet has. What would a modena or tumbler be without type? It is, the basic structure of our beautiful birds.

**Question:**

- Do you feel that today's judges are repeatedly letting any deviations from the standard pass by? What?

**Responses:**

**Bob Dunlop;**

- I don't have any real complaints. However everybody needs to get on the same wave length. It seems that some judges let a few little things pass by according to their own taste.

**Don Phy**

- First we need to clarify our standard. For instance, our written standard says 5/8" beak and the drawing shows a shorter stouter beak. The standard regarding beak stains is not clear. It lets the judge define what is a light or dark beak stain. There are other things that also need

clarified so we know what to evaluate.

**John Heppner;**

- I think the judging is fairly good. We are a little quick to let discolored beaks pass by and style / type isn't given enough credit. We have head hunters and power necks doing well but style / type is 15 points and can't be ignored.

**Jim Garus;**

- Yes, I feel that some folks don't judge correctly on color (especially reds). However, some poor blacks make it through. Judges should judge all aspects of the standard. They shouldn't let and ONE

part of the standard influence their decision.

**Hank Ebbelaar;**

- Absolutely. The size of our birds and style / type. The standard calls for a proud and jaunty look. Many of our birds stand like ducks.

**Victor Cardillo;**

- Type and mane are overlooked by many of today's judges. Overall, crested birds are judged very well, however the judging of plainheads is very inconsistent. Shortface crosses have hurt the quality of the plainhead helmet.

**Question:**

- What shows do you plan on attending this year? What are your thoughts about attending, entering and participating in shows?

**Responses:**

**Bob Dunlop;**

- Uniontown PA (dist 7 meet), NYBS Louisville (dist 6 meet), Cleveland OH (dist 6 meet), Marshall MI (dist 6 meet), Springfield IL (dist 3 meet), Reading PA (eastern sectional), Myrtle Beach (national). The only way to strengthen our membership and our club is to have everyone see our birds. We also need to be visible to other breeders. When we sponsored the health seminar at Louisville last year, many breeders from other clubs also attended. Hopefully we will continue to gain members by being visible and innovative at the shows.

**Don Phy**

- NYBS Louisville (dist 6 meet), Des Moines IA (central sectional), Oklahoma City OK (dist meet), Shawnee OK (dist meet), Myrtle Beach (national). You should make an effort to go to your district meets. If you can make a sectional ...great. You should really try to get to the National, its very important.

**John Heppner;**

- Pageant of Pigeons (western sectional), NYBS Louisville (dist 6 meet), Des Moines IA (central sectional), Myrtle Beach (national) Great Western. Exhibitors should definitely show their birds in the best shows. You never really know how your birds stack up unless you are showing against the greatest competition.

**James Jensen;**

- Pageant of Pigeons (western sectional), NYBS Louisville (dist 6 meet), Myrtle Beach (national), Salt Lake City UT premier show, Hurricane UT grand circle pigeon show. You have to show if your serious about breeding and competing. You need to get out and see the competition. We can all become loft blind and going out to the shows can change our minds a little. The competition is one thing but we need to be at the shows to participate and enjoy the fellowship. We all worry about less helmet breeders and birds at the shows. We need to get out and promote the breed, encourage other breeders, share birds, and go out of our way to make the hobby fun.

**Hank Ebbelaar;**

- Pageant of Pigeons (western sectional), Myrtle Beach (national). I like the camaraderie we have when showing. Meeting with the guys is more important than winning.

**Victor Cardillo;**

- Shows for us this year will include the Pittsburgh show we had last weekend, the District 6 show on November 21st in Cuyahoga Falls Ohio, Louisville, the Eastern Sectional to be held in Reading PA in January, and the National in SC.

The other day, I was talking to a friend about our most memorable hunting trips. With smiles on our faces, we told stories to the wee hours of the morning. As we looked back on our favorite trips, we realized that our best trips, did not always

get us a deer. What was it about all the hunting trips that made them so much fun? It was not the hunt, nor the kill, not even the enjoyment of eating the deer. It was the fellowship and the scenery. Now, when I look back on the favorite shows that I have been to, even though I may not have fared too well in the judging, I still had a wonderful time. I could fill up to 10 pages of stories about great times at shows I've attended. When I look at the trophies, I can't remember what show they came from, and really don't care. To me, shows are fun, whether I win or loose in the final lineup. At the last national I attended in PA, my best memories are, talking to a man I never met before, Victor Stool, a runt breeder and a very interesting man. I also remember playing Ping-Pong with a pigeon friend of mine. Our shows have so much to offer, not only what you expect to happen because there will be good birds in the show, and a few birds for sale, but it's the unexpected things that make it more of a vacation, and less of a show. Not Convinced? Ask Bob Dunlap about being at a show with Jim Garus, (he won't be able to keep a straight face); or ask Tony Patti how the water was at the National. If you do ask them, you will see in their faces what a show is supposed to be. Have fun, see you at the shows.

**Question:**

- What needs to be done to prepare helmets for shows? When should this process start?

**Responses:**

**Bob Dunlop;**

- The main issue is the condition of the birds. This needs to be done year around. I use good 16% protein feeds and add safflower to help put shine on the feathers. I also keep bath water in front of them regularly.

**Don Phy**

- When you see one that's a good show prospect you need to start from day one. I move the show prospects to conditioning lofts. There is one for the cocks and one for the hens. These lofts have wooden floors which seem to keep the feathers nicer. The birds are conditioned and then, obviously, the birds are trimmed before the show.

**John Heppner;**

- Ideally the process starts in March or April when spraying for lice to keep on top of the parasite problem. That is the only process I worry about early. The key old birds need to be broken up in time to have a good moult. Safflower and other oil seeds are added to the feed for the moult. The lofts should be arranged with just enough perches that the cocks don't fight but few enough that they don't keep moving around. Red grit should be removed early and replaced with gray or white. Then normal trimming 1 week before the show.

**Jim Garus;**

- Keeping the lofts clean and keeping the birds in condition throughout the show season is important. Otherwise I don't do any else special. I don't leave them out in the weather.

**Victor Cardillo;**

- Coop training is a must. Very often you see great young birds that are climbing all over the cage during judging. Trimming birds for a show is an art. New breeders to helmets should practice trimming their birds year around and not just at show time. All year long each bird should be checked for feather lice and treated as needed. There is nothing worse that a good show bird loaded with lice or pin holes in the feathers. Proper carrying cages should be planned out several days in advance, making sure they are clean, dry, and have new shavings on the floor. Crates can take a real beating from year to year and sometimes become hazardous to the birds such as protruding nails or loose latches.

**Raul Delgado;**

- Proper diet as in oil seeds; safflower, rape, and hemp to promote good feather. Plenty of surgical practice before trimming is actually done on the show team. One wrong feather trimmed can make a rosette a has been. Do proper trimming one week before the show, add proper cleansing solutions to the bath water, and check for external parasites.

**Question:**

- At what point do you start the culling process? Should we always wait a few years for the birds to mature?

**Responses:**

**Bob Dunlop;**

- I cull four times per year. As soon as I see an obvious problem I eliminate it.

**Don Phy**

- I start from day one. If they have obvious problems, for instance cross beaks, I start there. If they are decent looking birds I wait for them to moult completely to evaluate them.

**John Heppner;**

- My culling procedure is tied to the health of the bird. Weak or sick ones can be eliminated early. I wait for the first moult to basically go through the young ones for that year. I won't sell young ones until they have moulted. There is a window of opportunity to see their potential when they leave the nest but the real thing is the finished product after the first moult.

**Victor Cardillo;**

- I use a three step culling process:
  1. When the young are about 9 weeks old, I weed out a small amount of birds.
  2. When the birds are about 6 months old is when the heavy cuts will happen.
  3. The last round of cuts will occur before breeding season when the young are about 9 months old.

**Jim Garus;**

- I start my culling process right away. I put them into a culling pen and wait until after the first moult. It's amazing how many birds come back out of the cull pen after the first moult.

**Question:**

- What is the most common mistake made by people new to Helmets?

**Responses:**

**Bob Dunlop;**

- Some people will buy a bunch of birds from different breeders when they should just buy a few quality birds from a single breeder. Keeping too many other breeds is another problem.

**Harold Strawniak;**

- Giving up on their mis-marked birds. Some people only go for markings and that's it.

**John Heppner;**

- Not buying good enough quality to begin with and being over concerned with markings in stock birds.

**Greg Munch;**

- My biggest mistake in starting with helmets was getting fixated on markings. I would stay away from mis-marked birds as if they would destroy my whole stud. I now realize that power can only come from outcrosses and with them comes marking problems.

**Mike Crawford;**

- Some people will go out and buy a bunch of good powerful cocks. While nice cocks are important, good hens are even more important. It seems that good hens are more likely to make good babies than good cocks.

**Victor Cardillo;**

- The top three are as follows:
  - 1) Trying to get too good of a deal when buying birds.
  - 2) Buying too many birds.
  - 3) Not understanding the standard.

**Question:**

- What is the most important trait on the helmet? (the one that without it in your loft you would have no hope)

**Responses:**

**Bob Dunlop;**

- Style and type. Birds can go a long way with style and type. A bird that's showing well catches my eye. The second trait would be the head.

**Harold Strawniak;**

- Station. Many helmets are loosing their station. This could be related to the longer feather being put on the birds to emphasize the crest and skull.

**John Heppner;**

- Style and type. This is supported by the colorful and lengthy description in the standard. (the proud and jaunty look) No other standard has a better

description of style and type. It behooves us to follow it.

**Greg Munch;**

- The most important trait is an upright and fully cushioned crest. The larger my crest gets, the more it tends to get loose, sloppy, and fall down. From the comments and warnings I have heard from J. Heppner, I guess this is a common malady of all crested birds, not just the helmet.

**Mike Crawford;**

- Style and type are very important, but without good head power you can't win today.

**Victor Cardillo;**

- Proper beak set. This sets the balance for the complete head of the bird.

**Question:**

- Do you vaccinate your birds? If so, for which diseases?

**Responses:**

**Bob Dunlop;**

- Yes, PMV and Paratyphoid. I learned the big lesson several years ago. I wouldn't even think about not vaccinating.

**Harold Strawniak;**

- No, I do not vaccinate.

**John Heppner;**

- Yes, I vaccinate for PMV and Paratyphoid. One time per year, mainly the youngsters.

**Don Phy;**

- Yes, I vaccinate for PMV. One time per year, just before the show season. One shot.

**Victor Cardillo;**

- Yes, I vaccinate for PMV only. The young birds are vaccinated during the summer and the old birds are done after the breeding season

**Question:**

- Do you have a medication or other care program for your helmets?

**Responses:**

**Bob Dunlop;**

- Before the breeding season I treat for canker. I give them Vetsulid several times during the breeding season. When I'm not medicating, I give them 1 tsp. of Clorox in the water.

**Harold Strawniak;**

- I worm them three times per year. Two days after the worming I give an antibiotic. Eleven days after the initial worm treatment I treat for worms again. This occurs two weeks before breeding season and then periodically through the year.

**John Heppner;**

- No, I do not have a health program. I treat them individually as required.

**Don Phy;**

- I give Terramycin one time per week all year. This is to stimulate their appetite, not really for medication.

**Victor Cardillo;**

- Medication program as follows:

During breeding season I use several types of vitamin's, starting in February, I use the following until the end of the molt.

Monday - Tuesday: "Wins More"

Wed. - Thursday: "Vitamin T.E.A.M."

Friday - Saturday: "Hemo-Plex"

Sunday - "Pigeon Builder"

My young birds get "Pigeon Builder" every day. I have found this to stop respiratory problems with young birds. It contains Chlortetracycline and many powerful vitamins.

To make it easy to give vitamins, I keep the packages all in one large coffee can. I also keep an open bag of rice to help keep moisture out of the can.

**Question:**

- Do you ever cross other breeds in to your helmets to improve a feature? What are your thoughts on crosses?

**Responses:**

**Bob Dunlop;**

- I think if the truth be known, everyone breeding top notch helmets today has crossed or has at least a bird that's blood has a cross in it somewhere. From show kings, to modenas, to tumblers, or about anything, if you want to refine a point somewhere you have to experiment. Many of our pigeons today are crosses that have produced a breed. I'm not saying that crossing is for everyone. It takes a lot of time, room, and patience to cross a breed. Most of all you need to know what to keep and what to cull. If you don't, it won't take long until you have a loft full of junk.

**Tony Patti;**

- Yes, I have crossed other breeds into my helmets (more than one). Crossing is a very lengthy process. One should have a lot of patience, space for stock birds, and a plan of what they wish to obtain. You don't need to be a geneticist to cross but you should familiarize yourself with the basics of what traits dominate others. It is important that people who outcross to other breeds restrain from showing those birds until they are good examples of the standard.

**John Heppner;**

- No, I haven't crossed. I have always been able to do well enough with selective breeding. However, I am sure that we all have benefited from other people's crosses. (Most notably Tony Patti's) The crest, thick neck, beak set, and frontal of today's helmets are a result of crosses. Before crosses there were typey helmets with nice manes, but they didn't have a wealth of feather.

**Don Phy;**

- I have never crossed anything into my birds. We should do whatever it takes to meet the standard. To get the birds that our standard calls for we need long feather. Years ago helmets didn't have it. Crosses have helped us get the long feather. There are plenty of birds out there with it. I definitely approve of crossing but I just don't have the patience to do it myself.

- Yes, I have crossed tumblers into my plain heads. I feel it has greatly improved the breed. We should do whatever it takes to meet the standard.

**Victor Cardillo;**



### Questions:

- When pairing your birds do you always mate the “best to the best” or do you choose birds with features that accent one another?

### Responses:

#### Don Phy;

- I choose features that accent one another.

#### Victor Cardillo;

- I always choose features that accent one another, almost to an extreme.

#### Mike and Nora Hatton;

- Michael and I both choose the birds that counteract each other or those that can offer better traits to their young.

#### Tony Patti;

- I do both. I put my very best pair together, then I pair the rest strength to weakness.

#### Timothy Hatton; (junior member)

- I take my best birds and find the birds closest to them to mate.

#### John Heppner;

- The top pairs have nearly everything, therefore they are paired best to best. As birds are lacking further down the line, I accent features.

#### Jeffrey Hatton; (junior member)

- The ones that accent one another are the ones that I put together. It makes a better bird and I don't inbreed as much.

### Questions:

- Do you use feeders for your helmets? Are feeders desirable? Should we strive to get our birds to feed their own young?

### Responses:

#### Don Phy;

- Yes, you have to use feeders. We could try to get them to raise their own young, but they are probably beyond that now. I think it is more important to get a good pigeon than to get them to be good parents.

#### Victor Cardillo;

- Yes, only for crested. I never use feeders for plain heads. We should strive to reach the standard, whatever it takes. If that means feeders, that's OK.

#### Mike and Nora Hatton;

- We don't believe in using feeders. Feeders are desirable if a pair is unable to raise their own young. If they will raise, why have double birds just to feed.

#### Tony Patti;

- Yes, feeders are almost a necessity. The old style helmets were excellent parents. However, with selective breeding the modern helmets have lost the natural instinct to feed. I think we should try to get them to feed, not necessarily strive for it.

#### Timothy Hatton; (junior member)

- No, if the birds can't feed themselves I don't want them. Half the fun of raising pigeons is that they can do everything for themselves. I think we should strive for birds that raise their own young. I don't need 4 birds just to raise 1 or 2.

#### John Heppner;

- Yes, they are both desirable and necessary. Feeding their own young is a nice goal, but I don't think it is going to happen.

#### Jeffrey Hatton; (junior member)

- In short faced birds feeders are desirable. Why should we strive to get them to feed? I am not willing to give up a possible champion and perfect pigeon just because the parents won't feed it.