



AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL RACING PIGEON BOARD
INCORPORATED

CODE OF PRACTICE
FOR
PIGEON KEEPING AND RACING IN
AUSTRALIA 2017
REVIEWED 2022

NATIONAL CODE OF PRACTICE

The Australian National Racing Pigeon Board (Incorporated)

PIGEON KEEPING AND PIGEON RACING

IN AUSTRALIA 2017 (Reviewed 2022)

Introduction

This Code of Practice has been produced by the Australian National Racing Pigeon Board (ANRPB) as a guide to assist pigeon fanciers and associated organisations to meet standards and guidelines as set out by Animal Health Australia.

Animal Health Australia is the Federal Government Agency responsible for producing standards and guidelines for the keeping of all livestock, including poultry and birds, in Australia.

The principle effect of this Code of Practice is to ensure that the welfare of pigeons is the paramount consideration in all activities associated with their keeping and racing.

Whilst this Code of Practice has been produced by the ANRPB the primary responsibility for compliance rests with the pigeon keeper / fancier and their associated club, association and or federation. This Code of Practice should be treated as the base standard to which all pigeon keepers / fanciers are obliged to meet. Due to the diverse nature of pigeon racing across Australia, namely geographic and climatic conditions, customised elements (for some Federations, Associations or clubs) such as; Liberation Protocols, Vaccination requirements and Long Distance Racing, will be deemed as supplementary to this base National Code of Practice.

Refer also to the – Federal Government Animal Health Australia publication –

“The Australia Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry 2017”

All pigeon keepers are bound by sections of that code that refers specifically to pigeons.

The main issues that the Code will focus on are:

1. Welfare of Pigeons and Duty of Care
2. Housing and Feeding.
3. Exercise and Training Pigeons.
4. Releasing of Pigeons and Racing
5. Governance and Other Issues.

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1.0 Welfare of Pigeons and Duty of Care

The owner or handler, who has the care or charge of a pigeon or pigeons has a duty to take all reasonable measures to ensure the welfare of that pigeon or pigeons. The welfare of the racing pigeon is the prime consideration in all activities associated with keeping and racing pigeons.

1.1 ill Treatment & Neglect

Acts of ill treatment of pigeons such as wounding, mutilating, abusing, tormenting and torturing, wanton or malicious beating, withholding feed, water and shelter causing dehydration or starvation, and any act causing unnecessary pain or suffering are unacceptable treatment of pigeons.

1.2 Handling Pigeons

Pigeons need to be handled in a professional manner, cupped in the hand with the feet between the handler's fingers. They must not be handled roughly or held by the head, neck or wings.

1.3 Vaccinations for Pigeon Virus

Pigeons need to be protected against outbreaks of identified pigeon virus. Pigeons should be vaccinated with the appropriate recognised vaccine (where available) for the identified virus, at the dosage recommended by the manufacturer. Vaccination requirements may vary from state to state and the owner or handler should be compliant with the governing organisation's requirements.

1.4 Health & Well Being

The health of the pigeon needs to be monitored on a regular basis and if necessary veterinary advice and help sought in the treatment and prevention of disease and elimination of internal and external parasites & pests.

2.0 Housing and Feeding

2.1 Pigeon Loft Construction

Pigeons have traditionally been housed in buildings called lofts. Lofts are constructed in many different sizes and configurations to suit or fit individual circumstances, such as available space within a conventional residential block. Lofts need to be built to ensure that the pigeons within are secure from predators and protected from the elements. Dryness within the loft is essential.

The construction plans for lofts need to take into account local council by-laws regarding building and health regulations. Lofts need not be palatial buildings but should be constructed to good building practices, painted and maintained to enhance the image of the sport and not be an eye-sore to the general community.

2.2 Ventilation

Ventilation is to be provided to ensure a constant supply of fresh air into the loft, and exhaust of stale air out of the loft, and to maintain dryness within the loft.

2.3 Flooring.

Lofts are not permitted with bare earth floors. Preference is for construction off-ground with minimum height from ground to floor level of 20cm, allowing for free flow of air under floor. Alternatively, on-ground concrete flooring with a plastic moisture barrier beneath is also acceptable. Also acceptable is 18 gauge 25mm galvanised square mesh flooring.

2.4 Insulation

For the welfare and comfort of the pigeons' insulation is recommended particularly beneath metal roofing to prevent condensation and dampness in the loft.

2.5 Loft Cleaning

Lofts, including floors are to be cleaned at least once per week. Deep litter dressing over the floors is acceptable provided it is kept dry.

2.6 The Racing Loft

Racing pigeons need to be housed, fed, exercised and trained correctly in order to reach peak fitness and maintain good health. Pigeons housed in the racing loft are expected to be released on a regular basis therefore their lofts can be somewhat smaller than stock lofts.

2.6.1 Race Loft - Minimum Space per Pigeon.

Where all space is occupied by the pigeons only, and excludes provision for owner occupancy, utensils, passageways, trapping and feeding centres, the minimum space per pigeon is 0.092m³. Therefore, a 1.8m deep x 2.1m long x 1.8m high race loft would be capable of holding 74 pigeons.

2.6.2 Perches

Perches can be of various styles to suit the individual fancier but there must be at least 10% more perches than the number of birds housed in the loft. Perches need to be provided at various height levels within the loft.

2.7 The Stock Loft

The Stock Loft is used to house the breeding pigeons of the fancier and because of their value and perhaps not being homed to the loft, are not able to be freed for exercise. These pigeons require extended space for their good health and well-being. The Stock Loft shall generally be of similar configuration as the Racing Loft with additional breeding compartments provided.

2.7.1 Stock Loft - Minimum Space per Pigeon

Adequate space to maintain health and well-being of pigeons within the Stock Loft shall be calculated as two & half times the allowance of the race loft as a minimum space per pigeon, i.e. 0.23m³ per pigeon (excluding nesting areas). Therefore, a stock loft 1.8m deep x 2.1m long x 1.8m high would be capable of holding 30 stock birds.

2.7.2 Breeding Pairs

Nesting pairs need to be provided with a suitable nesting box and bowl lined with a suitable nesting material. The space requirement for the nest area is additional to the minimum per bird space. Provision of a refuge may need to be provided for the hen bird to escape an aggressive cock bird.

2.7.3 Youngsters

Young pigeons must not be weaned before they are capable of feeding and drinking independently of their parents. Squeakers should be "fully feathered" under their wings before being weaned.

2.8 Feeding & Watering Pigeons

2.8.1 Feeding and Watering at the home loft

It is recognised that there are many successful methods for feeding racing pigeons and it is not intended to regulate this activity other than to ensure pigeons receive sufficient nutrients to maintain good health and fitness. Racing pigeons thrive quite effectively on

most grains and legumes and this feed needs to be fed on a daily basis. Clean water is essential in the home loft and needs to be available at all times with or without additives. Water is to be changed daily and more frequently in summer months, especially for the stock loft.

2.8.2 Feeding and Watering in the Race Crates

Racing pigeons basketed in crates on the night and scheduled for liberation the following morning are to be provided with water before the scheduled release time. No feed is to be given to these birds as it is not required and may be detrimental to their flight home.

Racing pigeons basketed in crates on the night, and scheduled for liberation other than the next day are to be provided with both feed and water on the days before release.

2.8.3 Feeding and Watering En-Route

Where transportation of racing pigeons to a scheduled race point is extended past, or likely to extend past, 1500 hours the day after basketing the transporter will stop to rest, feed and water the birds as necessary. The transporter should reach the liberation or race point no later than 3 hours before sunset or at least 4 hours prior to release in the case of an overnight basketed race (short race).

3.0 Exercise and Training Pigeons

3.1 Free Flight

Racing pigeons need to be released on a regular basis to maintain good health and obtain race fitness. Pigeons released around the home loft need to be under the watch of their owner or handler and are not permitted to land anywhere except on the home loft or yard. Exercise periods should be at least 30 minutes per day and no more than 180 minutes per day.

3.2 Non Flight Times

Open lofting of racing pigeons for long periods without control is not permitted. Other than the regulated exercise periods, pigeons are to be confined to their home loft.

4.0 Releasing of Pigeons and Racing

Pigeons must not be released away from the home loft for training or racing unless in good physical health and fitness. Owners and handlers must ensure that the pigeons under their care are physically fit to return to their home loft from the release point.

4.1 Fit to Race

Pigeons are only to be accepted for competition on the grounds they are of sound health and physically fit to complete the journey set for the event. All pigeons entered in competitions are to be inspected prior to being placed in the race crates.

4.2 Stewards

Clubs & Federations conducting pigeon races have a duty of care to appoint competent Stewards whose role it is to inspect the condition of a suspect pigeon and if necessary refuse entry of that pigeon into a race if it is not considered fit to make a satisfactory return to the home loft.

4.3 Inspection of Pigeons

Handlers of pigeons being entered into a race will bring to the attention of the stewards any pigeon suspected of being in poor health, injured or in a condition that might reduce its chances of returning to the home loft.

4.4 Clashes on the line of Flight

Clubs and Federations conducting pigeon races will endeavour to avoid clashes with other pigeon releases that might cause confusion within the flocks of pigeons flying in different directions and reduce their chances of returning to their home loft.

4.5 Race Controls

Clubs and Federations will appoint a competent person or group of people (Liberation Committee) to ascertain the weather conditions over which the pigeons will return to ensure the conditions are suitable and give the pigeons the best chance of returning to their home loft. The liberation committee or a competent person will prepare a report of each release, stating the official BOM weather forecast over the entire journey for that particular race and what actions were taken in relations to that forecast. Clubs and Federations will, where necessary review these reports and recommend changes if required. In all cases liberation committees will err on the side of caution in dealing with releases in doubtful weather forecasts.

4.6 Liberation

Pigeons must not be released either in a race or training where weather conditions limit the pigeon's ability to return safely to its home loft. Clubs and Federations conducting races must appoint a competent person to manage and release the pigeons, hereafter called the liberator. The liberator will release the birds at the scheduled time after obtaining approval to release the birds from the appointed liberation committee. The birds are not to be released in rain or heavy fog.

4.7 Weather Hold-Overs

Pigeons shall not be released in unfavourable weather conditions that may reduce the pigeon's ability to return safely to its home loft. Should the weather conditions be unsuitable for the release of the pigeons at a release site, they can be held-over until conditions improve provided there is sufficient feed and water available for the pigeons.

4.8 Carriage of Racing Pigeons

The carriage of racing pigeons for both racing and training is to be within a recognised crate or pannier, allowing adequate ventilation and sufficient room for the comfort of the pigeons.

4.8.1 Race Panniers

The minimum internal height of transport crates is to be 21 centimetres and is exclusive of wire or false flooring.

The space allowance for each pigeon in a transport crate will be depend on the time the pigeon is expected to be contained in that crate.

Overnight confinement for liberation the following morning an allowance of 300cm² per bird is required.

Confinement for two nights which require the birds to be fed and watered in the crates an allowance of 350cm² is to be made.

Confinement for longer periods an allowance of 400cm² is required.

4.8.2 Water and Feed

Pigeons in carriage to a race point for release must be provided with clean drinking water and if contained longer than overnight the transporter is to stop rest and feed provided for the pigeons. The transporter must be setup to carry and provide clean drinking water and the necessary feed for the journey.

5.0 Governance and Other Issues

5.1 Performance Enhancing Drugs

Due to the significant time delay between the entry of pigeons for a race and the actual time of liberation, many performance enhancing drugs illegally used in other contests are rendered in-effectual for pigeon racing. It is however, policy that pigeon racing remains free of any administered performance enhancing drugs and this has particular reference to the use of corticosteroids. Any owner or handler found to have entered a pigeon with an administered performance enhancing drug will be held responsible and be dealt with by the relevant authority. Any pigeons found sick or dead within the race baskets at liberation can be sent for analysis. Where any inappropriate performance enhancing substance is detected the owner or handler will be held responsible and the matter dealt with by the relevant authority.

5.1.1 Random Drug Testing

Clubs and Federations shall have the right to conduct random testing of pigeon droppings for the presence of cortisone or any other performance enhancing drugs or substances. If an owner or handler refuses to produce a bird for testing the bird shall be deemed to have produce a positive test result and may be disqualified.

5.2 Airports

Owners and handlers will not release pigeons at or near airports, or in a line of flight that is likely to result in the birds flying over an airfield.

5.3 Imported Pigeons

Owners and handlers need to ensure that all overseas bred pigeons in their lofts have been lawfully imported.

5.4 Breach of Code

Where this code is adopted by a club or Federation as part of its rules or regulations a breach of code, depending on the severity of the breach, may result in either a fine, suspension or cancellation of membership.

5.5 Stray Pigeon Management

Clubs and Federations need to instigate appropriate management of lost or injured pigeons belonging to their members. Failure to report a stray pigeon or collect a reported stray pigeon, particularly if reported by a member of the public, will be viewed very seriously and may result in a fine, suspension or cancellation of membership.

5.6 Neighbours

A member shall attempt to resolve any neighbour's concerns or complaints in respect of their pigeons, such as the time of exercise around the loft, cleanliness and odours, and do all that is reasonably practical to avoid conflicts from arising. Clubs and Federations where practical will ensure that their members are complying with parts of this code in relation to complaints.

5.7 Local Council Laws

Legislation regarding pigeons varies markedly between states. Members shall make themselves aware of local council laws and by-laws relating to keeping racing pigeons and ensure that their lofts, cleaning, feed storage, exercise times and other council requirements are met at all times.

5.8 Social Media

In the modern age social media plays an important role in communication, information sharing, and connecting pigeon fanciers across Australia. Members should endeavour to ensure that their comments are factual and constructive in nature as offensive comments reflect poorly on the sport of pigeon racing.

This Code of Practice was endorsed by the Australian National Racing Pigeon Board (Incorporated) on 26 / 06 / 2017. Review 1 20 / 06 / 2020, Review 2 on 18 / 03 / 2023.



Vince Pedavoli

President ANRPB Inc.

Review Date: 18 / 03 / 2023



Stephen Shears

Vice President ANRPB Inc

Review Date: 18 / 03 / 2023

Appendix:

- **Animal Health Australia Standards and Guidelines 2017**