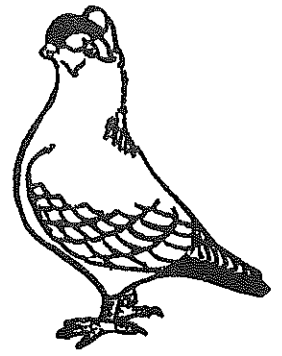


4-H PIGEON SHOWMANSHIP



When 4-H'ers exhibit pigeons from their pigeon project in 4-H shows, they sometimes have an opportunity to take part in a 4-H Pigeon Showmanship Contest. In such an activity the 4-H'er must present the pigeon and himself/herself to the judge in such a way as to show the bird to its best advantage.

PRIOR TO THE SHOW

The 4-H'er should handle the pigeon quite regularly in the weeks prior to the show so that it is accustomed to him or her and is not afraid when picked up and moved about. The pigeon should be washed, if needed, prior to the show (early enough to be dry before the contest) and should have its toenails trimmed (if necessary). These things are usually done at home before the bird is brought to show.

AT THE SHOW

STEP I: Taking Pigeon from Cage or Coop.

A handler who is righthanded should reach into the cage with the right hand, moving slowly so as not to frighten the bird, and place it on the back of the bird, turning bird so that its head is facing toward the door of the cage. Then slowly move the left hand under the bird so that the middle finger is between its legs and the index and the other two fingers are on the outsides of the legs. The thumb should extend up over the back of the bird to help hold the wings in place. (Instructions for lefthanded handler are opposite.) The hand that holds the legs and wings will be referred to as the "grip" hand in the following description and the other hand, the "free hand."

With both hands on the pigeon, holding legs and wings still, remove it from cage head first. (If you remove the pigeon tail first, you will probably break or tear tail feathers in the process. Also, you have less control of the bird if it tries to escape.)

STEP II: Carrying Your Pigeon to the Show Table.

After pigeon is removed from the cage it should be carried to show table with the same hand positions, but bird should be tucked in toward handler's body with the bird's head facing into handler's left elbow-chest area (right, for lefthanded handler). Bird will feel secure here until moved.

STEP III: Presenting the Pigeon to the Judge.

The judge will ask each handler to present his/her pigeon in such a way as to show certain body parts or regions. Therefore, it is essential to know the terms for pigeon anatomy (including feather types) and be able to point them out.

Handler in diagrams below is lefthanded.

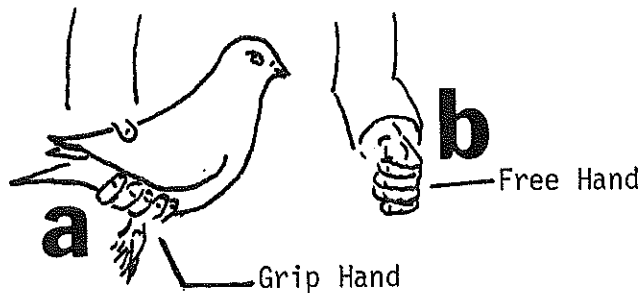


Diagram A - It is probable that your first request will be to present your pigeon in profile. This can be done by bringing pigeon out in front of you with "grip" hand (a), removing "free" hand (b) from back of pigeon. Free hand (b) can be used to keep pigeon's attention and to keep it alert by slight, catchy movements. Movements should not distract judges attention from the bird, however.

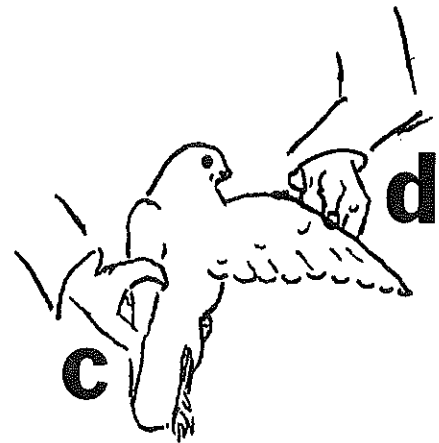


Diagram B - If judge asks to see any of the wing feathers, turn pigeon's head toward you with grip hand (c) and spread one wing with free hand (d).

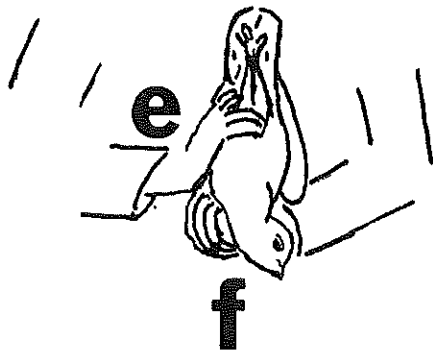


Diagram C - The keel and other body regions on the underside of the pigeon can be shown by turning pigeon's head downward with grip hand (e) and providing extra support with free hand (f). In turning pigeon's head downward the axis of the pigeon's body should be perpendicular to the handler's body so that in the downward position the axes of pigeon and handler will be directly parallel.

Each pigeon showman will adapt his own variations of this technique based on individual experiences and preferences. However, things that are always standard for the handler in showmanship are: 1) be neat and clean; 2) courteous to the judge and to other handlers; 3) be alert and keep an eye on the judge at all times; 4) accept the placement you earn in the contest like a good sport. There are no losers in a showmanship contest, some handler's just place higher than others.

This publication was prepared by John Mellott, former Extension Agent, Multnomah County, Oregon.



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