

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION

OF AMERICAN HOMING



PIGEON FANCIERS, INC.



THE SPORT OF RACING PIGEONS

NOVICE GUIDE

RAISING AND RACING HOMING PIGEONS

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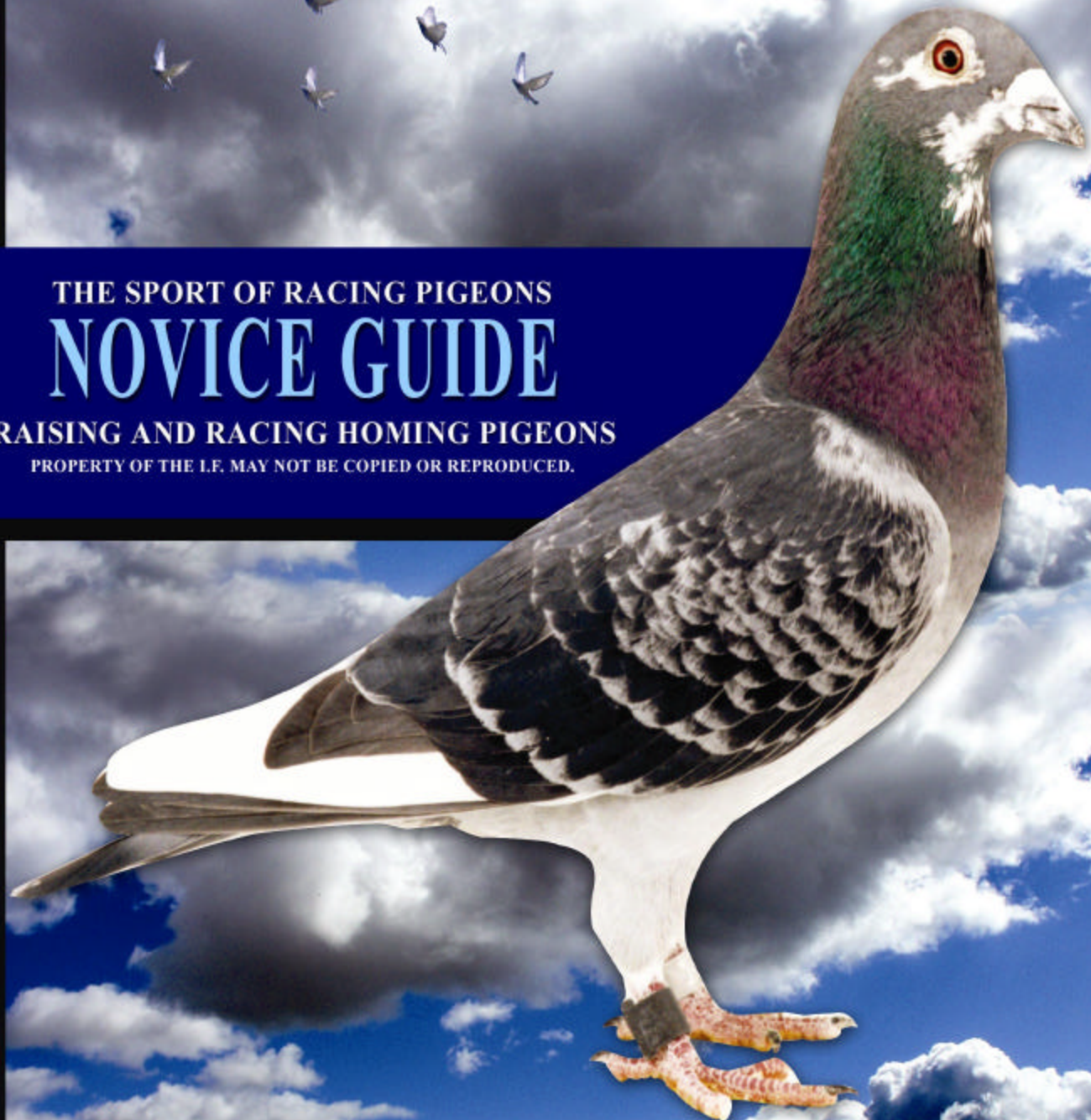


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Introduction

The International Federation of American Pigeon Fanciers, Inc. (I.F.) welcomes you to the fascinating hobby of breeding and racing pigeons. This brochure was prepared to help novices get started in a wonderful pass time that has provided countless hours of pleasure to hundreds of thousands of people around the world.

Virtually anyone can enjoy this hobby and sport. Pigeon fanciers represent all age groups and all lifestyles. The hobby is affordable for people in all income brackets. Raising and racing homing pigeons is an ideal activity for the entire family, especially children who learn responsibility, life sciences and time management from caring for their pigeons. Men as well as women enjoy the pleasures of raising and training these feathered athletes. The sport is also ideally suited for retirees who have time on their hands and are seeking satisfying activities as well as new avenues to make additional friends and relationships.

Homing pigeons are hardy and easy to raise in addition to being highly intelligent. They adapt well to almost any climate or geographic location. Because of their strong homing instinct, they can be released to fly around their home and be trained to return from 600 miles or more. Watching a flock of well-trained birds circle around the yard or return from a journey of several hundred miles provides satisfaction and excitement that is unequaled by few hobbies.

Pigeon racing is an international sport. Although Belgium, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Taiwan are hotbeds of racing pigeon fanciers, homing pigeon fanciers can be found in virtually every country. Pigeon racing in the United States is healthy and growing as well. American racing pigeon fanciers are some of the most enthusiastic in the world and are always ready to help new people join their ranks.



Acquiring Birds

** Visit local fanciers * Help-A-Beginner Program *
Guarantees * Old birds vs. youngsters * Pedigrees **

Okay, the loft is built and the furniture is moved in. Now you are ready to acquire your first birds. This will be one of the most exciting steps on your journey to becoming a homing pigeon hobbyist.

“But, where I should get them and how much should I pay?” you will probably ask. The pigeon magazines and the Internet are cluttered with advertisements by breeders touting their champions. Prices can range from a few dollars to thousands of dollars. To the novice, this can all be very confusing.

You should start your quest for obtaining your first birds by visiting lofts in your area or speaking with members of the local club. When you explain that you have a loft and wish to become involved in the hobby, most fanciers will offer to give you birds to get you started. After you have raced one season, you can apply to the I.F.'s Help-A-Beginner Program for free birds.

If you decide to buy stock from an established pigeon breeder, ask the local champions where they obtained their birds and which type perform best in your climate and geography. As noted earlier, you will find many birds offered for sale through the pigeon magazines and on the Internet. You will also find links to breeders from around the world on the I.F. Web site. As with any type of purchase, remember **caveat emptor** is the rule: let the buyer beware. Don't hesitate to ask for references and what type of guarantee is offered with the birds, especially when you buy sight unseen. If the breeder offers to replace the birds with other birds rather than refund your money if you are not satisfied, you will probably be better off shopping elsewhere. You should also inquire which vaccinations, if any, your new birds have been given.

At this point in your pigeon experience, pedigrees may not have much meaning to you. However, most breeders will furnish you with a pedigree tracing the ancestors of your new stock. The critical thing to look for in the pedigree is how the parents, grandparents, sisters and brothers of the bird you are acquiring have performed in competition.



If you can select and pick up the birds in person, so much the better. Ask an experienced fancier to go with you. If this is not convenient, the birds can be shipped to you overnight by the U.S. Postal Service via Express Mail for a reasonable charge.

Some breeders feel it is best to start out with mated pairs that have proven to be reliable breeders and racers. It is preferable for novices not to buy birds that are more three- or four-years old to avoid potential infertility problems. In addition, some older birds are so attached to their lofts and nests that they may take a long time to adjust to their new surroundings before settling down to breed.

Buying mature, mated birds also has the advantage of being certain of the gender. The sex of young pigeons is not always easy to determine and the beginner may run the risk of bringing home two birds of the same sex.

You also have the option of buying recently weaned youngsters that can be settled in your new loft and flown. Most fanciers will only offer you birds that have not begun to fly if you plan to release them from your loft. If you decide to take this route, make certain the youngsters are not more than 40 days old, otherwise they may be too strong on the wing and head for the old loft the first time you release them. Most reputable breeders will return the birds to you if they return to the loft where they were born.

Recently weaned youngsters will still be squeaking and they will have a small amount of yellow fuzz on their heads and chests. Handle them gently. You should have an experienced fancier instruct you in the proper way to handle a pigeon. When you get the birds home, put them on the floor of your loft. They may stay there as long as a day, but they will quickly find a perch. You may wish to gently dip their beaks in the water for a few seconds so they quickly learn where to drink. Watch for any bird sitting with shut eyes or rapid eye blinking for an extended period. If you see one squinting, dunk the beak into the water container for a drink. After your new birds have settled into their surroundings, take a handful of feed, put it into the feeder, and call your birds.



