

## **“Best of the Best”**

Have you ever wondered why some birds are far better than their loft mates and for the same reason why some Breeders are always on the “*Winning Side*” of things? Is it by chance or luck that they continue to be that much better than others year after year..?! The answer is “no”, it has to do with the understanding that all great breeders know and that is “**Genetic Purity**” or the breeding of close relatives and family members.

Now after saying all that, we should have an understanding of basic breeding practices. We have all heard the term “**Inbreeding**” and “**Line breeding**”. What does that really mean? To put it simply it is the mating of close relatives within a family tree and gene makeup. There are many that would argue that “**Line breeding**” (a little further apart on the family tree) are just a form of “Inbreeding”, and for that reason I will leave your thoughts to yourselves in this area. I will use the term Inbreeding during this paper.

Let’s talk a little about “**Inbreeding**”; it is of my opinion and others that generally speaking the definition of inbreeding is that it is the mating of specimens that are more closely related than the average of the breed in question. So please explain, “*The mating of a father to a daughter, or a mother to a son, and a brother and sister mating*” would be considered “Inbreeding”.

In the livestock area there are many “**Master Breeders**” of all types of animals and the one thing that they all share in common is their knowledge of how to reproduce the “Best” they can of what they are breeding. That is done by the use of “Inbreeding” which creates “Genetic Purity”.

The result of “Inbreeding” is the essence of “selection” when dealing with undesirable or desirable genes present in the breeding stock. All “undesirable characteristics” should be eliminated and “desirable features” retained for future breeding of next generations. What we are trying to do is produce even greater “Genetic Purity”. Great breeders are regularly producing specimens that are, in the sense “true purebreds”, that go on to be great breeders of their breed.

Where do we start? We start by obtaining the best breeders you can find from a breeder that has had the same family of birds for years and is always on the winning side. By doing this you have saved yourself years of trial and error in your efforts to breed excellent stock. These birds are already of “close” family relationship and are a great place to start.

Let’s take a look back at history for a moment at a name we will all recognize, William H. Pensom, born in England but moved to the US later in life. He is probably the most famous breeder of Birmingham Rollers in the world and was the creator of a strain of rollers whose decedents are still to be found in 90% of the thousands of lofts around the world today. His strength was “Inbreeding” and can be found in his book, “*The Birmingham Roller Pigeon.*” You see he was able to understand that to improve your strain of birds; it must be done with correct inbreeding and “strain making”.

There are still many “fanciers” who look down on “Inbreeding” and continue to breed open lofts or with little regard to family relationships. This form of breeding is in all likelihood the reason for their poor performance and poor youngsters, rather than strong vigorous birds. On the other hand, the “fancier” who practices “Inbreeding” of close genetic makeup specimens of high quality are always producing winners year after year, and all of uniform “*type*”.

The loosely used word “Strain” is in my opinion totally misunderstood by most “fanciers” today. They buy stock here and there with little regard to their genetic relationship. They may do some “Inbreeding” (with very poor knowledge on the subject) or frequent “Out crossing”. From this they produce varying types of birds, some good, some bad but all with very little genetic relationship. In my opinion, they have no right to call their stock a “Strain” at all.

***To create a “Strain” you must practice “Inbreeding” and “Line breeding”. By doing so you will be on your way to “Genetic Purity”, and the creation of the “Best of the Best”.***

***Nino  
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