

Imprinting Early

Thought to write a few words on my handling of young birds once taken from the parents at 28 days old. I prefer to take them away at 4 weeks old as they start to become a nuisance to the parents and the next set of eggs. Now some may argue this is too early while others may think a little late. Whatever works for you, is my answer to that debate.

The youngsters are placed in young bird section with some placid droppers and given the breeding mix. The hopper is left on the floor throughout the day. This "free for all" will last about 6-7 days until I am satisfied the youngsters know how to eat and drink. I will check on their health and condition daily just in case some may have trouble feeding themselves. Once I am satisfied the youngsters are doing well, the feed is only given in the evening. Now the training starts (about 5 weeks old) with the feed and the call to feed. I will scrape the floor just before feeding them by hand... for about 15 minutes whenever possible. During this time I will whistle a familiar note to which they will associate feeding time and throw seeds on the floor so they get accustomed to picking them. The rest of the feed is then given in a hopper while I sit and wait for them to finish. This routine sets up 3 things...feeding off the floor which they will then do off the roof...gain confidence and tameness with handler.... recognize the whistle as a time to come in and feed.

Only then will I let them out of the trap...But I will change the feed to a depurative and cut the amount. At this time they will not strike up so quick but will flutter up and down. I leave them out for a couple of hours while I watch their every move. If they are not trained to these stimuli how else can you get a dozen birds off the roof and into the trap...only through their stomach. Needless to say, droppers are used at all times during training as they are the primary method of coaxing the little darlings back to the loft. Once they have taken a few spins here and there I whistle them back into the trap by throwing the seeds closer to the trap and eventually inside the trap. When they have all entered I lower the trap door and go inside the loft to the young bird section. With a whistle, I call them all into the young bird section and within seconds all are scurrying on the floor looking for the seed. They are kept sharp at this stage but not starving to death.....I hope this helps some of the novice fanciers.



Here is a pair of nest mates at 26 days old. In the next two days they will be removed from the parents and placed with the rest of the young birds in the young bird section. Here their training will commence. Training and discipline will determine whether they make the young bird team or not, whether they stay or not. I usually put them out like this in front of the loft so they get better acquainted with the look of the loft. On the loft roof they cannot really see what the actual loft looks like so I do this little extra while they still cannot fly to improve the odds of staying.every little bit counts.