

## **LEON MEYER AND ALBERT WESSELS USE MARKER GENES TO SELECT RACERS FOR DINOKENG LOFTS**

Written by Hannes Nel

Somewhere along the line Leon Meyer and Albert Wessels came to realise that youngsters that show certain traits, typical of a particular pigeon family, will perform well in one loft races. Genetically speaking this is absolutely spot on – they are actually using marker genes to select youngsters for racing. Dinokeng is probably not the only loft for which they select racers in this manner, but this article is about their performances at Dinokeng Lofts, so we will discuss it in that context.

Research has shown that, if a certain breeding pair in a loft produce a chick with a particular mark, such as a tick eye, a certain type of wing, muscle and/or feather quality that is typical of that particular pigeon family, then that youngster will be a good racer. One or both parents display certain visible characteristics that appear to be associated with good racing performance, and once you have identified this, you will always know which youngsters to send to the race or loft of your choice.

Of course it is never quite that simple – there are other factors that also play an important role in the performances of racing pigeons. This is why Klerksdorp racers, the name under which Leon and Albert races in the Klerksdorp Racing Pigeon Club and Western Racing Pigeon Union, also select only super healthy youngsters that experienced no stress while growing up. The characteristics that they seek for in future Dinokeng racers include excellent feather quality, vitality, average in size and preferably cocks.

Klerksdorp Racers performed exceptionally well in the Dinokeng One Loft races for the last three years in a row.

- In 2011 they boasted the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ace Pigeon. They were also 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Team Championship and one of their pigeons took the 38<sup>th</sup> place in the final race. In addition one of their pigeons was 13<sup>th</sup> in the first Super Turbo race and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the third Super Turbo race.
- In 2012 they boasted the 10<sup>th</sup> Ace Pigeon and four of their pigeons won money in the final race. They were also 14<sup>th</sup> in the second Super Turbo race.

- In 2013 they had the 1<sup>st</sup> Ace Pigeon and took the 9<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> places in the final race. They also took the 14<sup>th</sup> place in the BarZAlona race.

They breed from only proven breeding pairs, of which the Hofkens cock, ring number QATAR-08-33810, named Oil Baron and Nico Dryer Houben hen, ring number ZA BPF/D-07-6017 are probably their best breeding pair. They breed in single pens to ensure that the pairs mate the way they want them to. Prior to breeding, breeding pairs are treated against different ubiquitous diseases, notably against paramixo virus and paratyphoid. Breeding pairs are fed a high protein mixture and a special grit mixture to which vitamins are added. Leon and Albert do not pay much attention to specific pigeon strains, but they do believe in certain pigeon families that are strongly inbred, mostly ancestors from their already mentioned main breeding pair. They do bring in new breeders every year, but only pigeons that they believe will improve their existing gene pool.

Youngsters earmarked for Dinokeng Lofts are injected twice against paramixo virus, treated against external parasites and worms. Youngsters are kept in a separate loft section and deliberately taught how to eat and drink (from drinkers similar to the ones at Dinokeng Lofts). Youngsters are sent to Dinokeng Lofts two to three times in different months to eliminate the possible effect of age on racing performance.

In closing, the partnership offers the following advice to beginners in one loft racing:

- Only enter the best and healthiest youngsters that you breed.
- Only breed from pairs that showed that they produce winners.
- Participate in partnership with one or more pigeon friends that you trust.

