

BIRMINGHAM ROLLER

Note: Although this breed has no general *standard of excellence* for exhibition purposes, it is far too well known in the British Isles to be omitted from any complete work of reference for judges or breeders.

Mr. Jim Mullan, a noted breeder and exhibitor has kindly supplied the following notes on this breed.

General Characteristics: The Birmingham Roller is a flying breed which has been developed into the world's best performer and aerial acrobat. This pigeon has a dual purpose inasmuch as it has a strong following for both performance kit flying and in the show pen. Its numbers at the major shows are larger than even some of the best fancy pigeons. This dual purpose makes them one of the most liked of all the flying breeds. As to a *standard*, most roller fanciers carry an unwritten standard by word of mouth passed down from generation to generation. The following standard is the unwritten one of the roller fraternity:

Head: Viewed from the side, the head should rise from the wattle upwards and backwards gradually until it reaches its highest point just in front of the eye, then for a short distance should carry backwards almost straight and slightly downwards merging back into the neckline without any corners which would upset the line of the profile. There should be more back skull than frontal. The head should have a good width when viewed from the front and pinched face pigeons should be avoided.

Feather: As with all flying breeds the feather quality must be second to none. A Roller which is in good order looks fit from the word go and has a strong and ample width of feathers with a wealth of cover, not loose and listless with slow reflexes. The wings should be tightly folded against the body and appear part of same. They should rest upon the tail with the secondaries and covers overlapping the back. The wing length should be such that the tip of the flights touch within $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (13 mm) of the end of the tail made up of 10 flights and 10 secondaries. Opening the wing to a flying position the ends of the flights and secondaries should make a convex curve or a straight line with all feathers overlapping to make a good fan. Pigeons with gaps between feathers should be avoided. The tail should consist of 12 feathers held tightly and when viewed from above should not be more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ feathers in width, and if the stance is correct should be carried off the ground by approximately 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Size: Rollers are a medium to small bird; as a guide, from the nape of the neck to the tip of the tail a cock should not measure more than $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches (21.6 cm) and a hen not over 8 inches (20.3 cm). Short rather than long. Medium size body with a good keel not too deep or shallow extending well towards the vent bones. Most fanciers call this apple-bodied. Viewed from the top the pigeon should appear wedge-shaped.

Eyes: The colour of a Roller's eye can be any of the following: orange, yellow, pearl, gravel or bull. The eyes should be set towards the front of the head and the pupil should be perfectly in the centre. The cere should be unnoticeable. A red eye cere should be discouraged for show purposes. Odd or bull-eyed pigeons are barred and not shown.

Beak: The beak setting should be such that a line passed through the centre of the beak will pass through the centre of the eye. If it passes higher than the centre the bird will be considered down-faced and if the line passes lower the bird is too straight faced. The beak should be of medium length with a smooth neat wattle.

Neck: Short to medium, fairly thick at shoulders tapering to the head without any sudden breaks in the line from the back skull.

Legs: Medium length, short rather than long, feet placed forward giving the appearance that without effort the pigeon could take off — not knock-kneed or too wide.



From *Exhibition and Flying Pigeons*, Harry G. Wheeler

Performance: The Birmingham Roller has been developed from the common tumbler to a degree that far excels all others. A bird rolling in the correct manner should spin over in backward somersaults tight and fast so that one cannot count the revolutions, a tight-feathered ball rolling to any depth that the fancier cultivates his particular family to achieve.

Colour: All the colours under the sun.

From head to foot a king amongst performing pigeons and if kept in good condition with the correct diet a joy to behold in the air and the show pen alike.