

## Another Colorful Mess

by

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Unfortunately, this is a very busy time of the year for me both at work and at home with my pigeons, so I am going to start out this article with the intentions of making it a very short one.

As you probably already know, I am now in my third year of working with the Horemans family, and recently, I have encountered an interesting yet painful problem that I would like to share with you. As I have mentioned many time in the past, the Horemans are a very inbred family, and their previous owner, Ed Lorenz, worked extremely hard to keep any type of white feathering out of the family.

While there are some blue and red checks in the family, the majority of the family is made up of blue bars and silvers. Since Ed flew the heck out of his pigeons, he developed something of a paranoia about white flights getting into the silvers, because as hard as they were flown, the flights on the silvers would often whip, and the addition of the white flights only exacerbates this problem, which would in turn often render the affected pigeons useless in their yearling year until they had the opportunity to go through a good molt.

Neither Ed nor I are in love with silvers in the first place, but I have never shared quite the same paranoia about pigeons with white flight as the addition of this color can help to greatly improve the quality of their eyes. Therefore, through my initial purchase, I obtained a terrific hen that went on to become the inbred foundation hen to my hit pair, and when mated with her brother, they have produced the backbone of my loft. As I pretty much knew that this was going to be the case when I selected them, I had to focus on all the positives and try and overlook her white flights. Ed was very quick to ease the pain by saying there hadn't been any white flights from that particular line in the four or five generations that he had owned them, and even without these assurances, it probably wouldn't have mattered anyway, because I knew that I had to have these two pigeons.

Prior to purchasing any of the Horemans, I was visiting with Ed when he showed me several silver brothers and sisters, and I fell in love with one cock (homozygote) and one hen. Collectively, this silver line had an amazing record both here and in Mexico, so I fought down my paranoia about silvers, and purchased them both.

From the beginning, I always thought that I would breed my way out of this color deficit in very short order. However, the hen wound up breeding eight silver children in ten, and being homozygous, the cock could only breed silvers, so everywhere I turned, there were more silvers! This fact seemed to delight Ed no end because every time I brought up the

subject, he would say, “Ah those silvers, you got to love them. Now if you could just get some with white flights mixed in with them, you’ll have it all!” When I didn’t bring up the subject, he would say, “How are my silvers doing for you? They are truly the gift that keeps on giving. Realize that there is an entertainment value here (meaning his entertainment!)”

Actually, I have kind of grown to like the silvers. I mean what choice do I really have? And there are some advantages. You always know which ones are cocks and which ones are the hens. Also, they are much easier to cull out, as they must be awfully good for me to hang on to them. They are also very easy to send off to the races, because again, having one less silver in my loft is not going to hurt my feelings. It’s just that I started razing so darn many of them!

Well, as you can clearly see, things were going along swimmingly. I had silvers coming out of my ears, but at least I had avoided the white flight situation. In fact, I devised a plan to obtain a T-check (black) hen, with the hopes of stamping out the silver problem once and for all. She had one little white feather at the bottom of her wing butt, and a tick or two on her neck, but otherwise she was pure black. In fear that she might produce a white flight, I initially mated her to a blue with the idea of only keeping the pure T-checks (long story). Ok, so this didn’t go quite as planned, as she immediately produced two blue bar white flights. Not a problem; off to the races they went.

The blue white flight foundation hen now has 15 representatives in the breeding loft, including her lone white flight son. I almost don’t have the nerve to mention that the great silver hen is mated to this white flight son. I know that this is a mistake and playing right into Ed’s hands, but they are perfect for each other in every other way, and with all of the brothers and sisters mated to blue bars, red and checks, I will have plenty of pure colors to work with. And besides, if this pair produces white flights, I can always break up a single pair.

I don’t know about you, I am not one to bother my breeders once they are mated. In fact, while I feed and water them each day, I almost never pick them up to look at them, but I do like to look at the babies once they are about 18 days old. Therefore, last weekend, when I found myself with a few extra minutes, I decided to look at some of them. I was in about the fourth individual breeding section when it dawned on me that every grandchild of that original white flight hen was now sporting a nifty set of white flights, and the situation didn’t get any better as I went down the rows.

In the end, the only place that I didn’t have white flights was in the silvers, which of course I touted to Ed as part my superior breeding technique. I figured that I had better get that shot off while I still could, because I am sure that window is about to close!

I don’t want to make it sound any worse than it is, because we are still only talking about one or two white flights on one or both wings, and at least the white is located in the smaller primaries, and if it can remain there, it might actually be beneficial. However, right now they look sort of like Jan Aardens only instead of being black they are blue

bars with white flights in the center of the wing. I haven't seen any silver Jan Aardens, so when the white flights get mixed in with my silvers, they may defy description. Although at that point, I am sure that Ed will help me come up with a description of what I have done to his beautiful family!

Until next time!

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