

Dark Training

By Dave Black

My dark training starts as soon as I have them kitting as young birds. Once they are on one hour training in daylight hours for a week and I'm getting them to respond straight away to the droppers, this is when I start introducing the lights. I put the birds out one hour before dark and as dusk approaches, I let them see the streetlights for a few minutes. By then they are normally hanging about and flying low. I then put on my spotlight and put out the droppers. By now it is only dusk and when they drop I leave them on top of the loft to chase seed with the droppers until it is pitch-black darkness. I call them in eventually through the trap where they all live together in a big cage.

I try and do this with every young bird I settle every day if I can, getting them into a good routine. This continues for about a week gradually leaving the light out later by around 5 minutes at a time.

In the second week the birds should be well accustomed to flying in the dark and I increase the stages by 10 and 15 minutes, depending on the sky and the weather for that particular day. Most of the time my young birds have not been boxed off individually at this stage. So this is when I do it, making sure all the birds in the kit are fed the same measure. Some are quicker than others to reach the seed when chasing around after it, thus I keep checking their weight by holding them individually and feeding each individually the required amount in order to get them balanced.

The feed I use is depurative. The depurative that I use is called [hens depurative] a Dutch brand. This enables me to have the control I need to get them down when I require. I find with this brand of depurative the kit rarely has a problem and it's only when they start to peek coming towards a competition in the warmer summer nights that they can take a while to come down. However, all the previous dark training should put them in good stead and you should usually get them down.

Once they have had a molt the following year, I find, they can be dark trained very easy and almost the first time they drop it is to the lights. This is the stage I am at now with 6 from last year. I hope the readers understand what I mean. As I am sure we have different terminology between ourselves and sometimes it may be hard to actually explain in detail what exactly I do and what works for myself.

