

PIGEONS AND PETS.



PIGEON HINTS.

BY W. FELLOWS.

(Continued.)

Insects in the Loft.—When the breeding loft, and especially the nesting places, are kept thoroughly clean, the nesting material frequently renewed, and a bath allowed, there is generally little danger of insects accumulating to any extent, but great care should be taken in the very hot weather that they do not get settled, or it will take great trouble to rout them out. They will find out any nook or cranny in the woodwork, and from these lurking places they will sally out, chiefly in the night time, and torment the young squabs. They consist of two kinds—first, what is known as the flea, which seems to suck the blood of the helpless young squab, and the small red insect called the mite, which infest the ears and nostrils, and if not soon checked accumulate to such an extent as to cause the death of the young ones. To clear off these pests the squabs should be taken in hand and well dusted with insect powder, and the nest pan thoroughly cleansed and fresh material placed in it before the young ones are returned. With respect to the woodwork, the lime-whiting or washing down with disinfectants may prove sufficient, but as a further preventative an occasional sprinkling with the diluted disinfectant may be resorted to. For the nest-pans a plentiful supply of fresh pine sawdust, which contains a good supply of turpentine, may be sufficient, but when it is kept for any length of time this ingredient loses its strength, and its place may then be supplied by a little insect powder, powdered sulphur, or Sanitas sawdust. In the hot weather the rubbed straw may be dispensed with as a nesting material, as it may form a hiding place for insects, and sawdust only used. In renewing the nests an extra supply of pans should be kept, so that they can be quickly changed, and so prevent undue interference with the old birds, and if this can be done when they are off the nest for feeding or changing so much the better, the plan I have found to answer best is to make the first change when the young ones are about a week old, and from that time till a fortnight, as soon as the

droppings accumulate to any extent. After a fortnight the changes need not be so frequent, as the droppings will be found mostly outside of the pan. These should be removed once or twice a day, and the sawdust outside the pan kept sweet and clean by frequent changing, and the sprinkling about of a little of the insect powder. These small insects do not seem to interfere with the old birds, but they in their turn may be worried by a larger kind called the tick. Their presence is generally shown by a continual pecking among the feathers, and this is accompanied by a stamping with the feet. When this is seen they should also receive a good dusting with the powder. If allowed to accumulate the birds will often desert the nest and the eggs or young ones it contains.

Re mating.—Owing to the many difficulties and disasters which attended the early part of the breeding season, the number of young ones in many lofts will not be very large, but where the results have been fairly good it will be well to examine the young stock to see if the quality has come up to expectation and to decide whether it is advisable to let the pairs remain as they are, or to try a change. Where the quality is poor it may be desirable to make some alteration in the mating, but if there is any doubt they should not be interfered with this season. If a change is thought necessary the birds should be separated for a time and then paired up as required, but care should be taken that this is carried out thoroughly before they are returned to the breeding loft, and no two birds previously paired should be put into the same loft. If this is not done there is sure to be trouble, either from the dissolving partnership and mating up as before, or from the birds going back to their old nesting boxes and fighting for the mastery, when, if eggs have been laid or young hatched, the former are likely to get smashed and the latter either trampled to death or thrown out of the nest pan and starved. Again, where it is found that any pairs are bad sitters or feeders, a few pairs of foster parents should be provided to do their work.

Choice of Food.—I would again warn young fanciers about being very particular as to the quality of the corn given to the stock, and more especially with respect to the peas. Several specimens have been sent to me for examination that have contained grains showing partial germination, and in every case where such samples have been used the condition of the stock kept has been far from good. In the worst cases acute diarrhoea and inflammation, resulting in loss of flesh, has been the result, and in others, where the number of grains infected was smaller, a gradual loss of con-