

"LET THEM TELL YOU"

Written by Wm Murkley Jr.

Flying Rollers, Spinners, Performing Rollers, etc. etc. Yes, we can call them anything we want, and several will always approach with that special question, "Why do they roll!?" I'm not going to get into that subject at this point and time, as that is a long subject in itself! Anyway, I'm sure we all have our theories on that matter, and that will not change the reality that they do roll and to different degrees. What matters most of all is we as hobbyists must manage them to the best of our ability in order to bring the very best out of them, from the very first time they hit the roof as youngsters, to the time their placement is decided in regard to their real worth. This may mean that bird or birds may be in next years holdover kit, in the stock loft, or just plain culled!

One of the very first things I learned from early on was; have patience. If most of you are like I was, once they're on the roof a day or two we have to flag them off, and get them going. DON'T DO IT! Let them settle into their surroundings for a couple of weeks etc. (This I had to learn the hard way!) Give them a chance to know one another better at this time, and when they begin to take some short jaunts above the loft, and they seem to be familiar with their new surroundings, I will then begin to get the flag out! The first time or so I will just shag them off and let them land whenever they please. After a few times of this the business begins. Since I have arrived at this method I have lost 0 birds on the first time up and they are much easier to control. When one is impatient, you will find yourself constantly trying to get them into the air. Not only that but they will have a tendency to be landing in the trees or the neighbor's surroundings.

Backing up a bit; I know a lot of you use cages on the roofs, to get them used to their new surroundings. That is fine if that is what works for you, but as I stated above, since I have patience in getting them settled in, I no longer have any problems. But if that method is what works for you, that is fine.

At first I don't mind if they stay up only for a minute or two, but as time passes I expect more and more out of them. Now during this time there will be a few who will insist on landing early or landing elsewhere. These I set aside when the rest are liberated and when they are about to land from their daily exercise, I will hand toss the problem bird or birds into the kit. After repeating this a few times, those problem birds seem to know what is expected of them, and from then on, I have no problems with them. When everyone is kiting and they are flying 10-15 minutes the REAL BUSINESS begins. This usually will take a couple of weeks once they are on the wing.

Flying Rollers is a lot like showing Rollers, in the respect that you will get out of them whatever you yourself put into them. This can be anything from a few minutes a day to a few hours. As most of you know, for whatever reason, I have always been one to shoot for the latter, in both areas! That doesn't mean one will win everything in sight. But it does mean, you most certainly will find yourself in the upper half. As the ole adage goes: "You get out of something whatever you put into it!" Whatever you decide is fine, as you have to enjoy them to the degree you feel comfortable with and necessary to satisfy your desires.

I pay very close attention to the ones that begin to roll early, with authority, depth, and velocity. From here I will watch that they continue on a regular basis and that they have control. These will be the ones which will find themselves in my holdover kit, stock loft, etc. The ones which don't meet the standards, of course, will be the culls!!

From here, one of the hardest things one will find in raising and trying to have a kit of excellent performing Rollers, is what I call "FEED MANAGE". This is something that can only be learned with time and experience. There really isn't anything magical about it, other than paying very close attention. Here is the point in time when you must let them tell you what they need. If they land early after 5-6 weeks they are leaned too much and need more feed. Generally speaking if they fly high on a continual basis that also is a sign they are getting too much feed. Here is where it can be a bit tricky as they may do this if they are too lean also.

Paying very close attention will tell one which it is. When handling them do they feel paper light? Are the wings far outstretched while eating? These are two very good signs that they are being leaned out too much! FEED THEM UP A BIT AT THIS TIME! During this time you will get a few who are spinning too deep or landing elsewhere, etc. These again I set aside for a week or so and then hand-toss into the kit before they are landing. Continue to watch these few birds and they will usually come around after a few times of holding them back. Not all will turn out, but in my family and loft, I find I have about 95% success.

In the past 4 years or so, I have had very few birds lost dues to overflys, rolldowns, or just plain not returning to the loft after their exercise. Those that go up-up and away, I think are too paper light. When performing and flying too long, if leaned down too much, they seem to get up into that upper atmosphere and the up lifts have a tendency to take them up higher. Not having enough stamina I feel they become lost or not able to return. Often these will be the very best of spinners you have, as they spin so much they tire faster and are weaker. If they are fed up a bit more, having more energy will enable them to have more stamina and thus able to return. More birds are lost in overfly's in my opinion because they are underfed

and not overfed. Another thing I have learned, if your birds are accustomed to flying in the evening hours, don't fly in the early morning.

The only losses I seem to face now are those that are too hot into the spin and for whatever reason after exercising they never return. I think they spin so deep and frequent and burn themselves out, that they don't have enough stamina to keep up with the rest of the kit and therefore get lost or roll down out of sight somewhere!

One of the next hardest things to accomplish is to have them just right on fly day, if you are flying in competition. This is all controlled by the amounts of feed you feed. I am convinced that the kind of feed you feed is nowhere near as important as how much you feed and when. Let me tell you what they need. If they land too early, give them more, if they fly too long, cut back on the feed, etc. On fly day if they are too lean they will perform their little hearts out for a short time and be exhausted. This will usually result in not flying the time. If they are fed up too much they will usually fly fast and roll very sluggish, flying for two hours or more.

I cannot give you a specific amount of feed to give. Some strains of Rollers are longer and larger, develop later, etc. Maturity, weather and several other things may enter into the picture. So that is why you have to know your birds better than anyone else. You as the "LOFT MANAGER" has the control to regulate this. One can dabble in different feed mixes, amounts of one particular seed to another etc. This may be helpful to a degree, but I have found the amounts given are by far more important! So yes, it takes time and patience on ones behalf, but when that special day arrives and you have them just right, performing at their best, somehow it makes it all worth it. There is nothing more satisfying when others are present and they really turn it on. You yourself have probably seen them do it on several occasions but when others are there to share in the fun in what you brought them to, it is just GREAT!!

That about does it here from "LAKEVIEW LOFT'S" and I hope in some small way something in this article will inspire someone out there! The above penned lines are just something I have learned over the years

by trial and error and credit must be given to some of those I visited on many of my cycle trips over the years from one state to the next. Some of those I visited and spoke with are what we call, "OLD TIMERS IN THE HOBBY", but very well versed in the flying of Rollers. From their ideas I tried to capitalize on them, and from some of my own ideas along with them. GOOD LUCK TO ALL OF YOU IN YOUR FUTURE HAPPENINGS, and don't forget, "LET THEM TELL YOU WHAT THEY NEED!"