

## Money-Making Ideas To Boost Farm Income



Pigeon breeding is an excellent way to make money from otherwise empty older barns, grain bins, mobile homes or other buildings, says Pigeon King International.



Pigeon housing consists of plywood nesting boxes and perches, with mesh screens below for catching droppings.

By Janis Schole, Contributing Editor

### Pigeon Farming Catching On Big Time

Looking for a sideline business? How about raising pigeons?

Pigeon King International Inc., based in Waterloo, Ontario, says its 10-year pigeon breeding contracts are an excellent way to make money from otherwise empty older barns, grain bins, mobile homes and other buildings.

Pigeon King's founder and CEO, Arlan Galbraith, is looking for large-scale breeders all across North America due to an expanding market for "Homer" racing pigeons and the smaller "High Flyer" pigeons.

Homers are used in distance racing (at speeds of up to 50 mph flying 500 miles in a day) and High Flyers are used in endurance flying, where fanciers compete to see how long their bird will remain airborne.

The sport of pigeon racing is gaining popularity around the world, according to Galbraith. Huge prize money beckons competitive pigeon racers, and proven high performance birds can be worth up to \$100,000 each.

There's also a large market for pigeon meat (squab) in a variety of ethnic markets, Galbraith points out.

Even with hundreds of farms currently contracted across Canada and the U.S., with flock sizes ranging from 100 to 2,000 pairs, Pigeon King International Inc. can't currently produce enough birds to meet the American market - and there are significant market opportunities in Europe and

other parts of the world as well.

Galbraith says the company has numerous holding and shipping barns in Ontario, Manitoba, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa and Missouri. In addition to his "contract flocks," Galbraith also owns and operates several U.S. breeding flocks, which range from 400 to 1,600 pairs.

Pigeon King offers a variety of investment options with 10-year contracts: Clients may choose to invest \$200 per young breeding pair which guarantees they'll be paid \$25 per healthy bird they produce. Based on an average annual production of 10 offspring per pair per year, a 100-pair flock could earn \$25,000 per year on the initial \$20,000 investment.

If clients choose to invest \$500 per breeding pair, the company guarantees payment of \$50 per healthy bird produced, or \$50,000 annually.

If clients choose to invest in squabbing breeding stock, they pay \$100 per pair and are then paid \$10 per young healthy bird produced.

"We also have a sub contracting program whereby an investor can purchase breeding stock from us and then sub contract them to individual farmers with no investment for stock by the farmer. We pay the sub contractor for all offspring at \$50 per bird. The sub contractor then pays the farmer \$25 or some other agreed amount per bird," Galbraith says. "This way the farmer gets a good income without having to invest in the breeding stock. He simply sets up his barn and

supplies feed and labor. This program is profitable for everyone involved and the sub contractor makes an excellent income on his investment without a lot of work."

New pigeon breeders need to invest money in either new or modified facilities to meet bird accommodation requirements.

"Breeding pairs should have access to a large wire mesh porch attached to the sunny side of the barn, so they can get outside. They love to sit outside whether it's sunny, rainy, or snowy," Galbraith says.

In addition to basic feeders and waterers, the birds' housing must have plywood nesting boxes and perches with mesh screens below for catching droppings.

"It may seem expensive to get set up, but you have your money back after a year or two of production," says Galbraith. "There's no quota or large equipment to purchase like there is in other farming enterprises like chickens or dairy, and all healthy young birds are picked up at your farm once per month, free of charge."

The breeding stock supplied by Pigeon King comes with 20 percent additional breeding pairs at no extra charge to as an easy method of providing a one-year warranty. "You get to sell all of the extra young from the free pairs in addition to the pairs you pay for, so if you lose a few birds, they're already replaced," he explains. "However, if you lose a large number of birds (more than 20 percent), we'll still replace them."

At 20 weeks of age, all healthy offspring

are ready to be sold back to Pigeon King and moved to a large holding facility from where they're either sold as breeding stock, or trained for several months before being sent to another barn for racing.

"We're the second largest supplier of breeding stock in the world and routinely ship birds in both directions across the U.S. border. We've also shipped birds as far overseas as Malaysia," he says.

"Pigeons can take extreme heat or cold better than chickens, and need 16 hours of light per day for maximum production," Galbraith says. "You can get good results from a naturally ventilated barn, or you can go to an insulated barn with small fans and some heat in the winter, if you prefer."

Pigeons' diet is simple and pelleted rations can be purchased at a feed mill that meet dietary needs of laying birds or young growing birds.

Galbraith has been breeding, flying and marketing pigeons for 54 years and says his Manitoba holding barn is the world's largest pigeon barn under one roof at 40,000 sq. ft. He's been contracting breeding flocks with individual family farmers for the past five years.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Pigeon King International Inc., Arlan Galbraith, Unit 4, 299 Northfield Drive E., Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2K 4H2 (ph 800 985-6132; pigeonking@yossmannet.net; www.thepigeonflyer.com).

### Falcon Business Flying High

Birds of prey are Karen "Kitty" Carroll's livelihood. She travels around the country demonstrating the art of falconry, and educating the public about the value and beauty of these unique creatures.

"Falconry is the oldest hunting sport that uses a trained wild predator in a human/bird alliance," she says. "It was once the sport of royalty and nobles. Although it's extremely time consuming, there are those of us who continue to take up the sport because we love the birds."

Carroll lives at Live Oak, Fla., and has been a "licensed master and eagle class falconer" since 1974. She and her husband, Pete, established their full-time business, Accipiter Enterprises in 1989. Now retired, Pete still does consulting.

The couple currently has 12 birds which include the Cooper's hawk, Harris' hawk, peregrine falcon, kestrel falcon, Barbary falcon, barn owl, barred owl and eagle owl. Most were obtained from private breeders around the country, she says.

The pair travels about 30,000 miles per

year with their trained birds - mainly throughout the northeast and Midwest - but they've been hired to perform as far west as Las Vegas and Louisiana.

Carroll offers a wide range of programs, and is often employed at agricultural fairs, sportsmen's shows, Scottish and Renaissance festivals, corporate gatherings, theme parks, schools, day care centers, and seniors' groups.

She comes with her own sound system and tent, but also demonstrates the birds outdoors when space permits.

In her show, "Birds of the Gauntlet," she shows the birds' speed and skill by allowing them to fly freely in a "simulated hunt." At the same time, Carroll presents a brief history of falconry and background information on each species.

The falcons are enticed to fly when she swings a rubber lure on a string. By chasing it in the air, the birds stay in good condition, and Carroll says it's a lot of fun for her, the birds, and the audience.

The flying style and slower speed of the hawks and owls make them more suitable to

demonstrate "perch to perch" or "perch to fist" flying.

When her lectures are in a historical context, Carroll dresses in period clothing, ranging from the Middle Ages and Renaissance, to Colonial. She discusses the importance of falconry, as well as the part these birds have played in our history and language.

Carroll's modern day context lectures focus on conservation efforts and bird facts.

She lets people get close to the birds while casually intermingling with the patrons of the fair or event. Carroll also provides a stationary, live "aviary display" where the birds of prey can be viewed. Carroll also answers questions from the audience during all of her presentation formats.

"My goal is to teach the general public about hunting and predation in nature, to help them appreciate the role predators play in our environment, and understand their natural habits, which may be perceived by some as offensive or evil," she says.

Carroll also offers private "Hawk Walks," where registrants can spend one to two hours

with her, flying hawks on nature trails. "A Day of Falconry," is a 1 1/2 day field excursion where people can spend time with her and the trained hawks, in the pursuit of game. Her "Falconry Apprentice Workshop" lasts a day and a half and guides participants on how to get started in falconry themselves. A more intensive 3-day course is also available.

Carroll also points people in the direction of national and state clubs, vendors, recommended reading lists, costs and equipment required for the sport.

Besides her falconry schools and educational shows/lectures, Carroll consults on bird husbandry, behavior and raptor housing.

Rates for Accipiter Enterprises' programs vary, based on state permit fees, so you'd need to call or write for prices.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Accipiter Enterprises, Box 1300, Live Oak, Fla. 32064 (ph 386 776-1960; hawkmom74@birdsofprey.net; www.birdsofprey.net).