

CAUCHOIS

BREEDING AND SHOWING

By : Filip Vierstraete

The Cauchois Europe Show, held in the village of Elzach, Germany in November this year, was once again a great success. Some 600 Cauchois were penned and for the many fanciers and their families it was the festal and pleasant peak of the season.

This will not be a show report, as you can see the photos of the winning pigeons at our website www.cauchois.be , but to us this is a perfect moment to stop at the thought of the importance of an international Cauchois Show and the preparation of our birds towards that show.

Uniform way of judging

It cannot be denied that, thanks to the 25 Cauchois-Europe Shows that have already taken place, the Cauchois is being bred and judged more and more in a uniform way within the European countries. Even those which don't have a Cauchois Speciality Club and not many Cauchois breeders are supplied with the latest documentation on the breed by the countries that have active Cauchois breeders' clubs. The first profit of this international event was the bringing together of breeders and breed sets.

Left: Three judges discuss a Cauchois at the Bruges Show.

Photo: Cauchois club Belgium.



In the beginning, it was necessary for a compromise to be found, in order to reconcile the various breed sets to each other. From the French point of view, one is still very particular about the finesse of wing bar marking and spangling. The German and Swiss breeders consider weight and posture to be more important.

In the first years, the judges' results were rather indistinct at the Cauchois-Europe Show. However, everybody was convinced that the Cauchois is not only a

form pigeon, but in fact a colour pigeon among the form pigeons and it took some skilled breeders only several years to combine the best qualities of both breed sets.

In the meantime, the Cauchois Europe Show developed into a show with over 800 Cauchois in 15 colour varieties. Today we see more uniformity in the exhibited birds.



Left: The entries of the French Cauchois Club at the European Cauchois Show in 2004.

Every year the German, French, Belgian, Swiss and Italian judges and breeders come together not only to judge the Cauchois, but also to discuss together the accents for the coming judgings in every colour variety, and to discuss the progress as well as technical problems concerning breeding.

For most breeders, the Cauchois Europe Show is the

pre-eminent place to buy or exchange pigeons. During the 20 years that our Belgian Club has been participating in this event, many Cauchois in various colours were imported from Germany and France, but also many Belgian birds 'moved' to France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and other countries. Thanks to the European Shows, the Belgian Special Club got the opportunity to actively work at the improvement of the Cauchois, which undeniably took a high flight during the past 20 years.

Right: The entire family is enjoying a trip to the Cauchois Europe Show too, even when the weather is not too good.

A social happening

The Cauchois Europe show is not only a 'technical' happening but also a social one. Where people with the same interest come together, it is inevitable for bonds of friendship to appear. Each year these bonds are tightened again between the pens. Not only the breeders, but their wives and children will appreciate the Cauchois Europe Show; almost always a location is chosen in the German Black Forest or the French Alsace. The beautiful district invites for walks and the



tasty cooking will certainly evoke the

holiday-feeling in everyone. Lounging along the picturesque streets, discovering beautiful landscape views, a visit to a wine cellar or sauntering along the shops with hand-made cuckoo clocks, having a delicious *choucroute* in a *Weinstube* or another tasty meal in a local restaurant; here it is all possible.

Initial hesitation

Breeders that have never taken part in a European Show may sometimes be hesitant. Questions like: are my pigeons good enough? Could I have good results with them? Shall I not feel lost over there? are all the same questions we all had in the beginning. So, in our Cauchois Club, we try to help our members lose their uncertainty by informing them about the present-day status of the breed and by making the Cauchois Europe Show an annual club-event.

Right and below: Club Day in Tiegem (Belgium) 2006.



Early September, at our annual Club day, the young birds are compared and judged by all present members; this is how the members get a first impression of the quality of their birds. And believe me, the pigeons that score high at our club day, we often see again with good ranking at our Club Championship and at the European Show.

Arrangements for participating in the Cauchois Europe Show are already made at the Club day. The enthusiasm of the breeders that take part each year is often enough to convince the new members to participate, or at least to visit the show. Whereas in the beginning, we travelled to the Cauchois Europe Show with only a handful of Belgian breeders, during last years a considerably large delegation from Belgium has become representative. On average, over 150 pigeons are



entered from our country and every year we succeed in penning the birds from the different regions by means of an arranged combined truck load.

Left: Europe Club show 2004. Owner: Filip Vierstraete. Photo: Cauchois club Belgium.

By means of the internet it is easy as pie to make local hotel reservations.

We always try, if possible, to book the same hotel for the whole Belgian delegation.



Above: best old male in show, Club show Menen.

Breeding pairs in top condition

Of course we cannot go to the Cauchois Europe show without preparation, that is, if we want to have good results. This holds for every exhibition where we want to show our birds in optimal condition.

The first preparations for the show already begin at the start of the breeding season. Starting with good birds is one thing, but we also have to take care that our breeding pairs can breed in a suitable and quiet loft, and in top condition (healthy and properly recuperated from the past shows). Only then we have a guaranteed chance to breed a reasonable number of youngsters, from which we can little by little choose the best birds. Several weeks before we start breeding, all pigeons are treated against trichomonas and coccidiosis. It goes without saying that the loft and the nest boxes are clean and dry. And you should make it a habit to treat against parasites; the birds regularly and the loft and pigeon baskets annually.

During the breeding season fresh water must always be available; little youngsters in the nest, that are left too long without the possibility to drink, pay for this lack of water with developing a crooked breast bone and will in advance be put off for the shows.

At about 4 to 5 weeks old the young birds can be taken from their parents and set in a separate loft where they can quietly develop.



Raising young birds

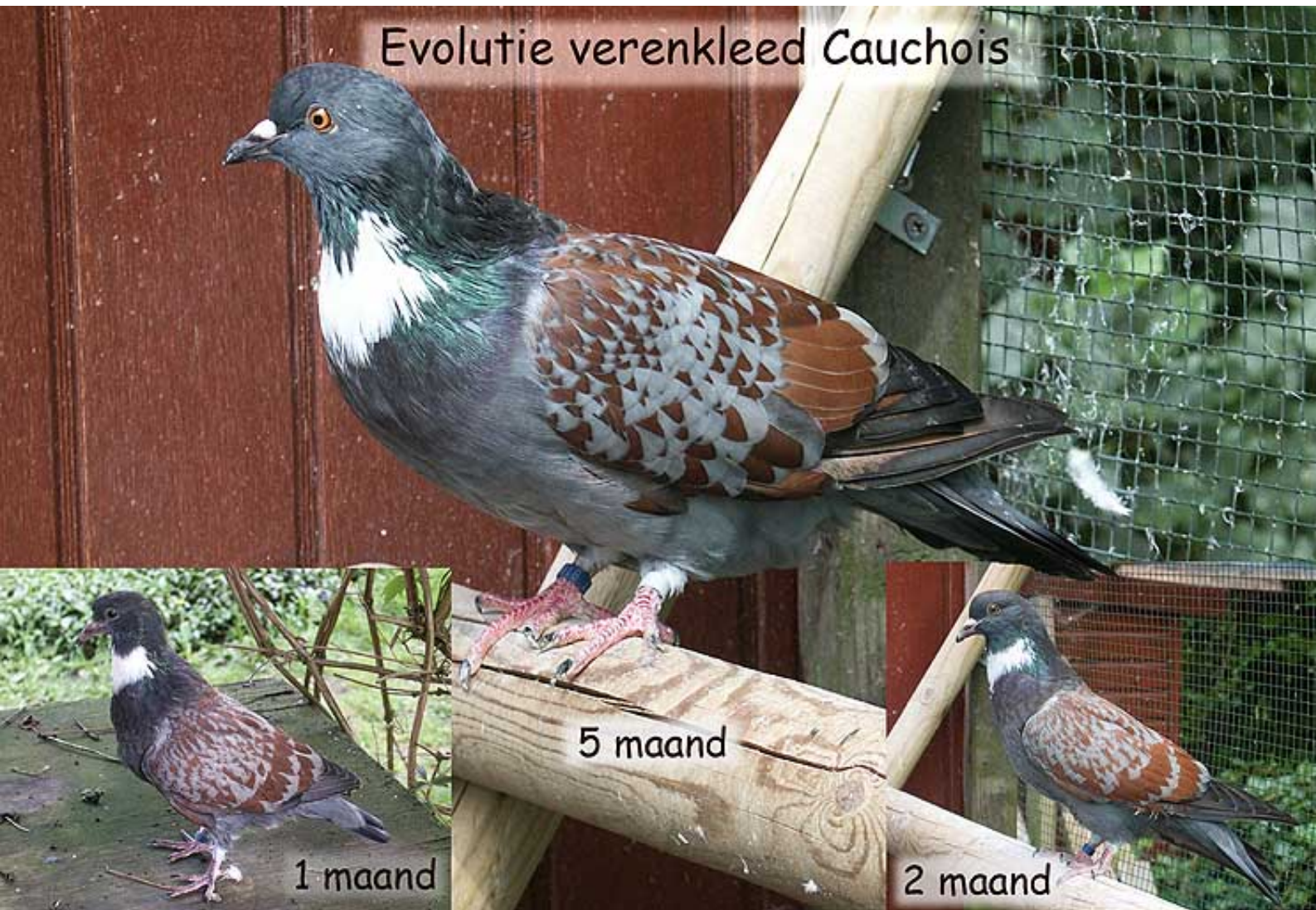
It is of great importance to monitor the development of the youngsters. Possibly sick or weak birds must be discarded immediately and those that won't appear to be good enough for showing or breeding should be selected out to make room for the better young pigeons.

However, you should take great care not to select too early, because the immature plumage is not at all definitive! After moulting the colour will become more intensive and the marking turn out better or worse. In the nest, a spangling that seems perfectly marked at first sight can later become too blue and an insufficient spangling can yet become very pretty after moult.



Also posture and stance cannot be judged too early; a loutish young pigeon can develop into a beautifully typed mature Cauchois, whereas a pigeon, that looked already a strong and robust bird as a young, will never actually be noticed in the group when matured. However, there are several things to select on in early stage, such as white flights, too much white at the abdomen, white nails etc.

Evolutie verenkleed Cauchois



At the beginning of July we stop the reproduction season. Parents can be set apart and split up, on which we may loft up the females separately and have the males bring up the last youngsters. That last young has four months to grow before the exhibition season starts. At the end of the summer, all pigeons must be vaccinated against paramyxovirose (obligatory for national and international shows) and don't forget to ask for your Union registration at your local club.

Preparing for the show season

After moult the pigeons can be prepared for the show season. We can have them get used to the pigeon basket by putting them in the basket from time to time, only for a short while. In this way the pigeons will learn to feel at ease during transport and damaging of the feathers will be avoided when we have to transport them later to the exhibitions. If you happen to have some show pens, you can use them to train your birds. Pen the birds from time to time to do your own judging, and have them get used to other persons as well.

Keep the pigeons in good condition and free from parasites: holes in the feathers cannot 'heal' and will cost you one or more points.

Regularly provide your pigeons with a bath with pigeon bath salts; it will soften the feathers and keep the skin free of dandruff.

Before entering the show, the Cauchois need some grooming to refine the lining of the bavet. This can be done by plucking some feathers, or even better, by

clipping them with a sharp scissors. The latter has the benefit that the pigeon will walk around nicely groomed till the next moult. In this way you can already start grooming as soon as the moult is finished; the grooming can be done more thoroughly and more relaxed and refined later if needed.

You can count upon some 15 minutes time per pigeon. If that must be done at the evening before penning, it will soon be a stressed situation resulting in a poor result. Also see to your pigeon baskets in due time; you'd better have them repaired before the start of the show season.



Showing several times with the same pigeons

What could you do if you want to enter your pigeons at several successive shows? There are no absolute rules for that. After some shows our birds are not emaciated at all and glow with health at the penning-out. However, at other shows, our birds turn out to have grown lean. Of course much depends on our preparations. A Show is not a natural and daily event; where the one pigeon will

sit at ease and eat and drink sufficiently, the other will nervously walk around in the pen and eat, drink or sleep little to nothing.



Left: Best young female in show, 97 points. Club show at Menen. Owner: Ronny Arryn.

For most pigeons that start the show season in good condition, showing with an interval of two weeks shall not be a problem. However, if exhibited week after week,

even the strongest and healthiest pigeons will completely lose their condition, and consequently: bad show results, more susceptible for diseases and above all it will take more time before they are ready for the reproduction season.

So when entering a show, you should have several pigeons in reserve, so that a pigeon that is not in full condition can be replaced by another.



Club show at Menen. Above: best young male in show, rose spangled, Owner: Eric Vansevenant. Below: best old female in show, blue red bar. Owner: Erik Vanhee.

To end with

To give you an idea of the many recognised colour varieties of the Cauchois, I included several pictures that were taken at our latest Club show in Menen, where we showed 158 Cauchois in 10 varieties, both with and without bavet.

For more information you can contact the board members of the Cauchois Club. See for their addresses at www.cauchois.be (English version available)
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