

ICE PIGEONS

AT BERND AND JENS HERBERT IN GERMANY

By: Volker Lortz (Germany)



Father Bernd in front of the second loft, which is located on the 'Co-operative' Club Grounds of the poultry club. He is an irreplaceable breeding mate, craftsman, loft manager and friend all rolled into one; without him the great successes would not be possible.

Today we visit the two pigeons breeders Bernd and Jens Herbert, who have dedicated themselves for decades to the breeding of Ice Pigeons. The father Bernd Herbert has bred the Black Barred and Chequer Clean Leg Ice for as long as I can remember in excellent quality. His son Jens specialises primarily in the White Chequer but has also all the other colour varieties of this very popular German Colour Pigeon, all in Clean Leg. A special variety, that he fosters with enthusiasm, is the once extinct Porcelain Ice; a variety that has in recent years found a new lease of life again, a variety still surrounded by myths and stories. Jens is a leading light in this region and a lot of clubs and groups want his active participation in their clubs. This ranges from the local clubs in Spachbrücken and the District Association Dieburg to the National Odenwald pigeon club, the Judges association of Hessen-Nassau and the Ice Pigeon Association. Of-course all these voluntary activities require a lot of time and commitment, especially with work, family and house building and enough other issues to fill his days.

Right: Ice pigeons chequered, Hauptsonderschau 2012 in Rinteln, 97 points, winning the Banner of Honour. Jens Herbert from Spachbrücken.





Above: Young chequered birds with very good even chequer marking in the wanted ratio of approximately 5 (black) to 3 (ice colour).

Geographically, the Family live about 50km south of the city of Frankfurt, on the edge of the Odenwald (Odens Forest). It is a very fertile area here, which has been dominated by agriculture and livestock for centuries. Soft, lush green hills and lovely valleys with orchards surround the town Spachbrücken, a district of the larger Reinheim region, the only disturbing influence is the busy highway 38 which divides the Village in two halves. Thousands of daily commuters use this Highway to the nearby Darmstadt to do their work. In the near future, the long-awaited bypass will allow the desired peace and quiet to return to the once quiet village.



Left: Jens judging the muffed Ice Pigeons at the 2012 Hauptsonderschau in Rinteln. In the background you can see Menno Apperlo (NL), who together with Willem Nieuwenhuis (NL) is judging the clean-legged Ice Pigeons. This first judging of our Dutch college-breeders at the Special Club Show in Germany worked out fine.

Hallo Jens, thank you that today you are willing to answer a few questions for our readers about breeding Ice Pigeons.

1. Family, work, home renovations, Jury activities, volunteering and maintaining a substantial loft of Ice Pigeons, how do you get it all this regulated?

This is only possible through an understanding relationship within my family. As a civil engineer, I naturally wanted to achieve in a specially built and largely self-realized house performing most of the work myself where possible.

Also professionally, I am currently pursuing advancement in my field of efficient building and modernization. At the same time implementing the usual in Germany seven years continuous Judges training for the Pigeon Groups E to M. That is the balance that I need. In the home I am strongly supported by my wife and my mother. My father is my right hand man when it comes to taking care of our pigeons and to the private construction of our house.

**Right: Ice pigeon black barred,
Hauptsonderschau 2012 in Rinteln
Engern, 97 points with SE.
Jens Herbert, Spachbrücken.**



Then there's also our six year old daughter who can already support the grandpa and dad. I always try to take advantage of certain tactics to get everything together. There is sometimes time management but also patience required. Often it is only late evenings and even at night that there is time for the hobby.



**Left: Ice pigeon white spangled,
Hauptsonderschau 2012 in Rinteln, 97
points with SE.
Jens Herbert, Spachbrücken.**

2. You are involved as Judge and Breed specialist (spokesman) of the Club and heavily involved in the directional and the systemic breeding of the Ice Pigeon. What in your view is the Status of the Ice Pigeon in Germany?

In principle the Ice Pigeon is very common, obviously some markings are kept by only a few breeders, with those obviously a few more breeders could be desired, the Clean Leg Chequer Ice Pigeon, also known as the 'Forellen' is the

most widely bred, At the moment the Muffed Black Bar is giving the most concern as it is usually only exhibited by one breeder at the Major Shows. The Porcelain Ice is now only kept by two or three Breeders again here more interest would be desirable.

**Right: Ice pigeons porcelain,
Hauptsonderschau 2012 in Rinteln,
97 points with SE.
Jens Herbert, Spachbrücken**

3. Many specialty and show reports carry your name, even in the Annual Review (circular) of the Ice Pigeon you play a leading role. Do you see the Breed Club for the next few years in a good position?

The Breed Club is in the fortunate position that the Committee is still relatively young, so in the short and midterm there are no worries about the active life of the Club. Off-course active young breeders in all



ranks of our hobby are a rare species and you cannot get enough of them. Especially the use of the new media is distributed across only a few helping hands. But our annual events such as the Whitsun meeting and the main shows are always organised three to five years in advance. Here there is always active breeders to be found for the organization and implementation.



Left: Young Pigeons lofts, the open pigeon flight of the Ice pigeons, also the loft of his second breed, the black-white spangled Crested Saxon Wing pigeons and Jana's Fantails.

4. What are the main points of the Ice Pigeon Breeding and what is the direction for breeding in the future?

Actually it can be explained quite quickly. A must in the Ice Pigeon is the correct basic colour, so the Ice colour as pale as possible and in the marking colour as dark as possible. Here is the main difficulty, if the Ice colour is excellent, then the flights and

tail bar, the wing bars, chequering or tail bar are often too pale. With increased colour of the markings comes an increase colour of the ground colour (colour reserve), usually in the area of the head and neck, also the over surface of the tail or in the throat. The correct contrast is the challenge that remains exciting year after year.

Right: Perfect mirror-tail of a porcelain Ice pigeon. In addition to the mirror also the dark black tailbar should show.



Left: The wing mirror is only showing after the first moult, the porcelain colour (a light shade of pink in the spangles) is already clearly visible, unfortunately the intensity of this colour becomes less after the moult.

Right:
The lofts in winter time.

5. *The Ice Pigeon belongs to the Group of Colour Pigeons, with naturally an emphasis on the correct colour and markings, is there not a danger that other important Breed features, such as Type, Shape, Stance, Balance (posture) or Head shape is neglected?*

Yes, that is correct. I'm always happy when my pigeons are evaluated once in a while by an 'All Breeds' judge. Since it is this that can call attention, to things we overlook as a "breed specialist idiot." As the Breed

Club Supervisor, I naturally try to be sensitive to all these other, not unimportant breed characteristics to look for and to take timely countermeasures if necessary when something 'fails' in the Breed. The position of the Flights (wing) in the Clean Leg Chequer (*Forellen*) has in the last year or so become too loose and with some varieties (markings) a certain size in the hens needs to be maintained so they do not become increasingly smaller.



Left: Jens Herbert with daughter Jana and father Bernd.

6. *How many breeding pairs and in which colour varieties do you both start with in the breeding Season?*

We usually start with 40 pairs of Ice Pigeons. Around 10 breeding pairs in White Chequer (Spangle), Porcelain colour, Black Bar and Black Chequer. This can be sometimes 11 or 12 pairs in one, and it only 8-9 pairs in the other, different varieties, but 10 pairs are needed for colour pigeons breeding, because the colours in my opinion is not so easy to stabilise as Form (Type).

7. *Are there problems in fertilization, breeding and development of the young and there are differences in the various colours of Ice Pigeon?*

No. Ice Pigeons have no extremes and therefore should have no problem to

produce two eggs and two young per brood and pair. Certainly there are times here and there when you have an unfertilized egg but 80 to 90% of our pairs have six young in three nests with no problem. When that is not so, then the problem is investigated and even an exemplary animal would be removed from the breeding loft. In the Muffed you really have to make some compromises. Because of their Muffs, the reproductive rate is not as high as in the Clean Leg but there are also no real problems. Whether or not the Fancier trims the Muffs for Breeding, each Fancier must find out for themselves, because there is some controversy about this at the moment. (Some finding trimming not needed.)



Above: Chequered and black barred Ice pigeons in the aviary.

8. *The Feed Trade offers an almost unmanageable variety of different diets and supplements. Can you please describe your feeding regime throughout the Year?*

We feed a normal feed mix for small type breeds of pigeons and mix in 30-40% barley. In old literature, we have often read that you should feed Ice Pigeons 80% barley and 20% peas and vetches, so they show no sheen on the throat and neck and the eye cere does not become red. We prefer a balanced mix with corn(wheat/barley etc) and other Oil rich grains. I am of the opinion that genetic selection is more appropriate and has more influence than extreme feeding. Once or twice a week they get herbal supplements and brewer's yeast in powder form over the moistened feed.



Above: Young chequered birds at the bath, a good ice-colour is also light when the feathers are wet.

9. *Setting together the breeding pairs and what is the correct method leads to many discussions among breeders with a wide variety of views. what is your strategy regarding this?*

We follow the principle of Balanced pairing. The Breed features should be present in at least one partner in a very high degree. Pairing two animals with the same good properties or shortcomings together, this is not a good idea. A secret recipe does not exist. There is also always a bit of luck involved. An excellent (97 grade) x excellent Pigeon does not equal to an excellent grading offspring! But even here the exception can prove the rule.

10. *There are certainly breed characteristics that can be selected for early, with others patience is called for. Please tell us what is your selection method of the young and old birds?*

Serious faults, such as dark Ice colour on the head, neck, throat, upper tail or tail base can be selected reasonably early but these serious errors are no longer the rule in breeding

stock now-a-days. However, the subtleties can be determined only after the first moult, so that a large percentage of the young must wait at least until partially moulted.

The White Chequer (Spangle) often shows rust in the neck, even using excellent breeding birds they are always prone to produce numerous offspring with faults in this respect. However, experience has shown, that rust in the wing markings may reduce or disappear after the moult. However, the rust in the neck area usually comes back again after the moult, so that the offspring of the White Chequer (Spangle) are often in the young bird loft widely outnumbered by the other varieties.



Above: Black barred Ice pigeons with well defined bars and intensive bar colour on a clear and even ice-colour.

11. *Health of the animals, is in my opinion one of the most important issues in the breeding of pigeons, what is in your opinion the most important measures taken over the Year?*

Besides the two vaccinations against paramyxoviruses in late summer and paratyphoid in January no extra medical measures are taken. Only the addition of herbal powder in the diet and in the autumn preventive measures against the Young Bird Disease in the form of carrot juice to complement the feeding of a pure natural based diet.

12. *In the introduction I have already referred to the re-breeding of the Porcelain Ice color. Please explain to us the history and current state of this extensive project.*

This is of course difficult to explain in a few sentences what breeders over many decades have attempted and achieved. There has also been a much written on the subject. Unfortunately, much of it false. I'll try to summarise the essentials. The main problem lay in the Flight feather (primary feather) markings. Here for decades in the standard drawing it was depicted as a type of 'Finch' marking, however, paired with a mirror tail marking in the tail that is not genetically possible. By cross-breeding the Oriental Owl, you have the mirror tail (white oval marking) (genetically: Oriental stencil) in the Tail and also in the Flights. After decades of practical research, together with the National Breeding Committee

it has been concluded, the Standard text must agree with the genetically viable. So now it is stated that the correct markings will be the 'Mirror' markings on the Flights and the Tail and no longer a reference to 'finch' markings. Currently, we have very beautiful examples of this Colour in both varieties of the Breed, Clean Leg and Muffed. The so named 'Porcelain' colour in the Wing markings now needs to be further improved. Well-bred animals have this feature already very clearly visible, others however, need to be looked at in the Hand to achieve an accurate evaluation. This feature needs now to be improved on a broad basis. The aim is not the Rosa colour Chequering such as in the Cauchois, but also no White Chequering. The Ideal lies in between, but in any case the Exhibition visitor should be able to recognize the colour of porcelain from the outside of the cage.



Above: Breeding pairs of the porcelain variety. For the time being it is still tolerated that the two central tail feathers are lacking the mirror marking.

13. *With all the beauty and grace of this elegant Colour Pigeon, we must not conceal from our readers, the problem of the amount of feather powder, produced by the Ice Pigeon. How do you deal with the problem and are there many breeders who give up the breed for this reason?*

At the moment, I do not know anyone who has given up his pigeons because of this factor but that's true; the amount of feather dust produced by this breed is enormous! You could not lean against the interior walls of the loft wearing good clothes, you would be covered! One of our best moves has been to make the Young Bird Loft in an open front design. The inner wood walls are virtually dust-free. This is for me, the healthiest design for man and animal. In principle a Pigeon loft with the best environment and especially ventilation to maintain health, this is of paramount importance and an absolute must for our Ice Pigeons in my opinion.

Right: The Breed specialist (spokesman) of the Specialty Club for Ice Pigeon Breeders in front of the aviary that was built by the Club at the 2011 Hauptsonderschau 2011 in Erlensee, in honour and memory of a deceased colleague-breeder.





Left: The bath water is not only an important part in the preening, in addition it is also a check on the vitality. Pigeons that do not rush immediately to the bath tub should be inspected more closely, as often something is not right.

14. *It is well known that your pigeons have won many prizes, Championships and Banners of Honour etc. Which of them do you rate highest?*

I think on principle the high gradings at the main Shows must always be the most valuable, as there you meet and compete with the Top Breeders in the Breed.

Our biggest success was the Europe Exhibition for Saxon Colour Pigeons and Ice Pigeons in Zwönitz in January 2011.

Here, we won five times the excellent (97grade) and five times the H (96 grade) and four times

European Champion with individual animals, and three times European Champions with the collections (Aviaries) in the markings: Clean Leg White Chequer (Spangle) - Black Bar and Black Chequer (Forellen).

Jens, thank you very much for your remarks and answers to the questions and we wish you and your family all the best and every success with your Ice Pigeons in the future. If you want to find out more about the Ice Pigeon, you can contact the Club or Jens Herbert at the address below.

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Right: Daughter Jana with her white Fantails. She also exhibits her pigeons with good results.