



## Why a racing pigeon hung up its wings

For the past few weeks our farm has played host to a racing pigeon from Dudley who decided it wanted to enjoy its summer vacation in the green and pleasant lands of Chicksands in Bedfordshire.

It began in early August when I found my 3 young children running around the garden 'Benny Hill style' chasing after a pigeon. Luckily the pigeon was fairly tame so I was able to catch it. When I looked at it closely it became obvious that the pigeon had damaged its undercarriage, possibly from contact with a telegraph wire, which was probably the reason why it was over 100 miles out of its way from its home in Dudley.



Racing pigeons have been used for thousands of years as message carriers. In both World Wars racing pigeons carried vital messages and after the end of World War 2, the 'Dickin Medal', which is the equivalent of an animal Victoria Cross, was awarded to 32 birds for outstanding service.

All racing pigeons carry a unique numbered metal identification ring which registers the owner with the racing authority and also a separate identification mark carrying the owners contact details, which was stamped on the flight feathers of the pigeon's wing.

I contacted the owner who confirmed that the bird was quite valuable and had in fact won several prizes as a member of his 'racing team'. He said that if we fed and watered the pigeon it would soon recover and would be back in the sky on its way home to Dudley after a couple of days.

By now the pigeon had become a firm family favourite and had been duly renamed 'Lily' by our 3-year-old daughter. So what better food to give to 'our' pigeon than one of our crushed up A-maiz-ing fat balls which contain our homegrown seeds and provides highly nutritious feed for many different types of wild birds.

The upshot is that 'Lily' adored the fat balls and polished off a whole ball in 24 hours!



In fact she has made herself so at home in Bedfordshire that two weeks later she is still with us and as I write, shows no sign of leaving!

Since our last column we have received emails from readers who have spotted many different birds feeding on our fat balls, including great spotted woodpecker, nuthatch, great tit, blue tit, blackbirds, robins and wrens.

Our fat balls are fast becoming the feed of choice for wild garden birds and so we are holding an exclusive competition for the readers of this column. If you see birds feeding on our fat balls and send in a picture, we will send the best 5 entries a **free bucket of A-maiz-ing fat balls**.

If you would like details of your local stockist of our A-maiz-ing fat balls please email James Parrish at [info@parrishsfarm.co.uk](mailto:info@parrishsfarm.co.uk). For further information on our products please go to [www.parrishsfarm.co.uk](http://www.parrishsfarm.co.uk).