Topic: Contemporary Group Testing
Date: November 1, 2005

The question I have concerns comparing contemporary groups. How do you use this comparison when looking at the past YB season, for example? How do you make selections for breeders when looking at your past YB season? Do you first make your genetic comparisons via your training outline (Utah lecture) and then race those birds during your YB season. Has the selection been done before the season? Do you even race YBs in a club/combine? Would those results be irrelevant to you and your program? - I.M.

1) **The only measure which allows for bird to bird comparisons is via contemporary groups.** So this means that your YB race results to your loft are a valid contemporary group and each race of the YB season is a valid test result. For example, you enter 15 birds per race and in one race you win 1st combine and in another race your best bird is 247th in the combine and 53rd in the club. In those two races you would score your two birds as 1st vs 15 and 1st vs 15. You have earned bragging rights for the 1st combine, but you really can't say that the bird that flew 1st combine really flew any better than the 247th combine. The day of the 1st combine may have had winds that favored your loft and they may have been against you on the day of the 247th placing. Of course, even a contemporary group (such as your YB team) isn't perfectly equal, but it is about as close as we can get and with enough data points it can be very reliable.

2) **The more data** you collect from valid contemporary groups, **the more meaningful your conclusions** become. So with respect to your question above, if I had 20 training tosses which I scored as test races and the 6 YB races, that would give me 26 data points. Now since we want birds that win at say 100 to 300 miles as YB, you probably only want to consider test races within that range. There is valuable data for the tosses of less than 100 miles, but you don't want to have the results of ten 30 mile tosses overshadow the results of the longer YB races (that also include larger numbers of birds which makes them more difficult, since the winner must break from the pack). Note: A bird which consistently scores in the top end of your contemporary group is noteworthy. You have to decide for yourself in your particular situation, what you consider a good "score". I usually value a performance in the top 10% of the contemporary group. There are a couple of ways you can look at the results of multiple tests. You could calculate the average UPR (e.g. 1st in a group of 15 is 1/15 or .07) where the low value is your best bird. However, this may be misleading since even the best birds do not perform at their best every race. You might consider ranking your birds on the basis of their average UPR when including their results from the top half of their races. It is a little dangerous to just pick the top 10 races, since some birds may fly many more races than others. Always try to formulate your comparisons based upon some kind of percentage rather than an absolute value.

3) **What you are really looking for is not the bird that wins races, but the bird(s) that produce race winners.** In this regard, you examine the data from the point of view of the parents, grandparents, aunts & uncles, siblings and so on. You will find that certain birds are behind many of your best performers. Finding them is of course the key to your future success. Everyone can identify a direct parent that produces winners, but to find the more subtle contributors, takes data from a well run contemporary group testing program.