Ringneck Doves

A Handbook of Care & Breeding

With over 100 Full Color Photos, Including Examples and Descriptions of 33 Different Colors and Varieties.

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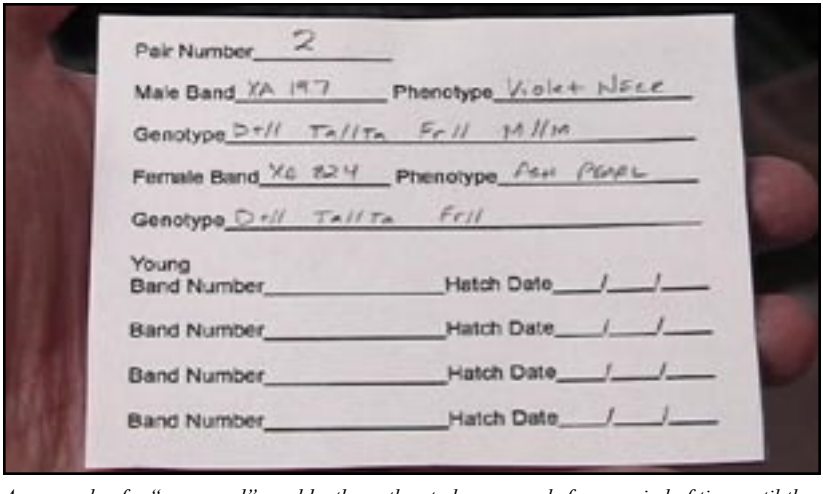
Responsible breeding includes accurate record keeping. It is recommended that you keep accurate record of all offspring including pedigree, hatch dates, sex, and genetics if possible. Various tools are often effectively used, such as notebooks, cage cards and computers.

Perhaps the most useful item used in record keeping is the **leg band**. Information such as the year and a unique number can be recorded on each band and colored bands allow for quick identification of individual birds, especially when there are a number of birds of the same color variety in the same flight. Leg bands may be purchased from a number of poultry supply companies, or members of the American Dove Association may purchase identification bands signifying membership.

A seamless leg band should be placed on a leg of each of your birds when they are from 5-10 days old. Waiting too long will make it impossible to fit a seamless band on the leg of the bird. See the banding demonstration on the next page.

These are seamless bands which are available to members of the American Dove Association. Each band is imprinted with the current year and a unique number.

Colored bands, such as these, are often used to identify family lines or gender. These bands are split, allowing them to be easily placed on the legs of adult birds.



An example of a "cage card" used by the author to keep records for a period of time until they can later be transferred to a computer database.

Dark Ivory

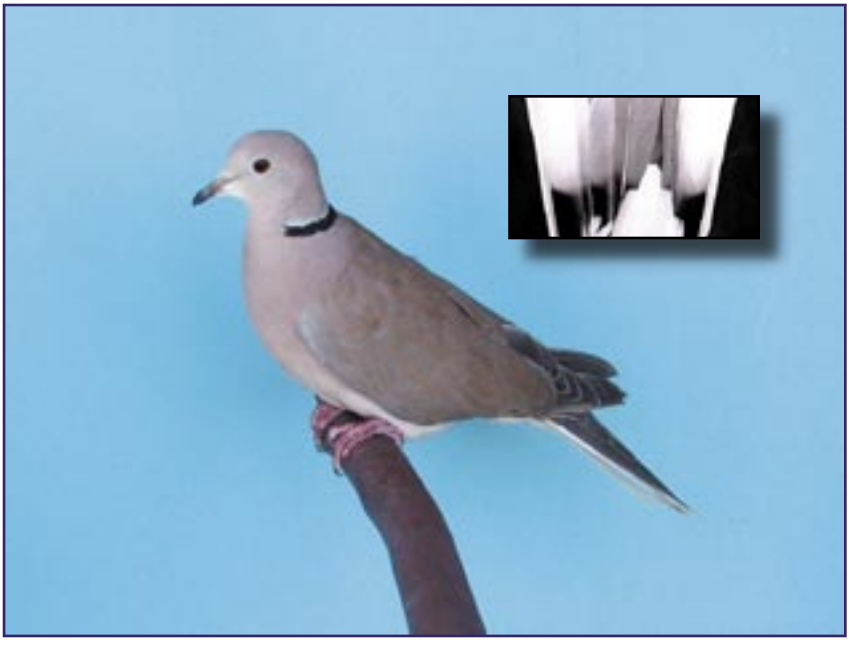
D+// iv//iv

The ivory (iv) gene creates a bird that has a shade of brown on the back wings and tail. The breast is nearly white, and there is a dark charcoal neck ring. The bill is typically light with a darker tip. The ivory gene also causes a "mottled" or "speckled" effect in the coloring of the iris in the eye as illustrated by the inset photo. Many color varieties of the Ringneck Dove derive from gene combinations which include the ivory gene. The ivory gene is recessive.

Pied

pi//pi

The pied (pi) gene causes randomly located white patches on an otherwise normally colored bird. The pied condition can occur on any color variety with a wild-type pied shown in the above picture. Pied birds have black eyes and the bill varies from light to dark. Many who see a pied bird for the first time wonder if it is a crossbreeding of white and another color but soon learn that this is not correct and that the pied effect is caused by a separate gene. There are any number of random pied patterns as illustrated by the photo below.



Wild-Type (Dark)

D+//

The wild-type or dark Ringneck Dove is dark grey and brown on the body, wings and tail. The head and breast are a violet or rose color and the neck ring is black with a white outline. The eyes are dark reddish brown. This is the basic coloration of the Ringneck Dove and the standard by which all other color varieties are measured. The dark (D+) gene is located on the sex chromosome and is directly affected by the other two sex-linked genes, blond ($d^{B)}$ and white (d^{W}), which cause varying degrees of dilution easily seen when looking at the undertail bar (inset photo). The dark (D+) gene is dominant to both blond (d^{B}) and white (d^{W}).

In this example, we will use a Dark cock heterozygous for white at the sex-linked locus and heterozygous for pied and rosy at the autosomal loci. The hen is a blond at the sex-linked locus and heterozygous for pied and rosy at the autosomal loci. We will work a Punnet square for each locus, and then apply the arithmetic method as we combine the gene pairs to determine offspring probability.

At the sex-linked locus, the genotype for the male will be D+//dw and for the female will be d^B//W. Here's the Punnet square for this locus. The male gametes are placed across the top horizontal of the square, and the female gamete down the left vertical of the square.

	D+	d^w
d^B	D+//d^B	d^B//d^w
W	D+//W	d^w//W

¼ D+//d^B = Dark (heterozygous blond) male
¼ d^B//d^w = Blond (heterozygous white) male
¼ D+//W = Dark female
¼ d^w//W = White female

At the autosomal loci, the genotype of both sexes will be +//ry and +//pi.

Here's the Punnet Square for the rosy locus.

	+	ry
+	+//+	+//ry
ry	+//ry	ry//ry

¼ +//+ = Homozygous Dark
½ pi//+ = Heterozygous Dark
¼ ry/iry = Rosy
Or 3/4 wild type (+//?ry), 1/4 rosy (ry//ry)

Here's the Punnett Square for the pied locus.

	+	pi
+	+//+	+//pi
pi	+//pi	pi//pi

¼ +//+ = Homozygous Dark
½ pi//+ = Heterozygous Dark
¼ p//ipi = Pied

Now we will use the arithmetic method of multiplying the fractions as we combine the gene pairs. There are 64 possible genotypes and 16 possible phenotypes. For the sake of simplicity, we will only do the combination of the 16 phenotypes.

The example at the right is called a dihybrid cross. A dihybrid cross is a cross in which both parents are heterozygous for two traits. You notice that the phenotypic ratio for a dihybrid cross is 9:3:3:1. This ratio is the expectation of the average and will prove true over many offspring.

A rosy pied Ringneck Dove. Photo by Greg Sweet.

Showing Ringneck Doves is growing in popularity each year and is supported by the American Dove Association (ADA), which sponsors a Master Breeder award given to those who earn points by showing and placing birds. The largest show sponsored by the ADA is the National Young Bird Show (NYBS), held each October in Louisville, Kentucky. The NYBS exhibits literally thousands of birds, which include nearly every imaginable breed of domestic pigeon, as well as both Ringneck and Diamond doves. The ADA also sponsors other shows across the U.S. that meet specific criteria, as outlined in their constitution and bylaws.

Judges take their responsibility very seriously and know the standard for the birds they are judging very well.

Doves are typically shown in color classes, where all birds of the same phenotype compete for the prize of "best in color." The winners of each color class then compete for the "best of show" prize. Judges are chosen from the most experienced dove keepers and take their task quite seriously. Showing doves is an enjoyable hobby and allows for wonderful opportunities to communicate with many other "dove people" throughout the world. When preparing to show

A beautiful ivory Ringneck Dove that won the "Best in Color" award at the 2004 National Young Bird Show in Louisville, Kentucky.

a particular bird, it is important that you make the bird look its best. To aid in this, you should ensure that your bird has plenty of room in its cage to avoid damage to feathers from the sides of the cage when it is perching or spreading its wings. Pay close attention to the cleanliness of your cage. If you are not careful, the feathers on your bird may become soiled in a cage that is not kept sufficiently clean.

Many who show their doves begin, early in the life of the birds, to get them used to close human presence and periodic touching. When being judged at a show, each bird will need to be transferred from its holding pen to the judging pen and if it is used to human contact, the dove will exhibit little alarm, and it will more likely retain its groomed appearance.

A "trick of the trade" is to make sure to put talcum powder (baby powder) on your hands when handling a show bird to keep sweat and oils from causing the feathers to mat and stick. You may also want to keep on hand a spray bottle filled with water to mist the bird to encourage preening just prior to and during a show.

Many dove keepers find that belonging to clubs and organizations where they can share their dove experiences with others very fulfilling. Below is contact information for the two major dove organizations in North America. There are many other smaller clubs that you can learn about from contacts made through these organizations.

American Dove Association
At the time of this publication, the president of the American Dove Association (ADA) is George Schutt of Lebanon, Tennesee. You may obtain current contact information for the ADA by visiting their website at http://www.doveline.com. Membership in the ADA includes an extensive and high-quality bi-monthly newsletter called the Doveline.

Canadian Dove Association
At the time of this publication, the president of the Canadian Dove Association (CDA) is Rick Dawdry. You can contact the Canadian Dove Association at the following address: P.O. Box 135, Plattsville, Ontario, NOJ 1SO CANADA.

A male ash pearled Ringneck Dove showing a typical defense posture.