

**BOARD POLICIES, PROCEDURES, & RULES of the
AMERICAN RACING PIGEON UNION, INC.**

Policy Title: Loft Certification Program

Policy Number: AU 390

Effective Date: January 1, 2003

Last Revision: July 2016



Introduction: The AU Loft Certification Program is voluntary and is meant to recognize those lofts and handlers that meet a set of minimum national standards of care in the handling and housing of their pedigreed, banded Racing Homing Pigeons. The general guidelines are set forth in the **AU Code of Ethics, (AU310)**, and certain provisions of the **Animal Welfare Act**, dated June 2002. These lofts must meet accepted standards of design, construction and maintenance with the owners complying with most current AWA guidelines and standards.

390.01 AU Loft Certification Procedure. A Committee consisting of one club official and one member-at-large from the member's club will inspect and certify that the inspected loft meets the criteria as set forth in this policy letter and those criteria established in the AU AWA Guidelines & Best Practices, dated November 2004, available from the AU office. The checklist and certification form is incorporated in this policy letter. There is currently no charge for the inspection, Certificate, or loft certification process.

390.02 Application and Certification Form. The checklist and certification is available from the AU national office and intended to be used as a guide by the inspecting, certifying officers.

1. Certifying committee will complete the inspection as noted below, certify compliance with minimum standards by checking the appropriate marked boxes, signing the form, and submitting it to the AU National office, along with a photo of both the inside and outside of the loft, including trap.
2. The AU National office staff will review the inspection, and will issue a numbered certificate of this inspection with: the date of inspection, members name, AU ID number, Loft name, club affiliation and complete address.
3. The completed certificate will be returned to the member.
4. It is recommended the certificate be laminated, framed and displayed in a conspicuous location at the respective loft.

390.03 CHECKLIST and General Criteria for Inspection. There is no "Pass" or "Fail" to loft inspections, however minimal accepted standards in the care and management of pigeons have been developed over the years, that are applicable to almost every loft and handler. (Inspectors should place an "X" in each check box if the loft meets acceptable standards. If not, the handler should be allowed 90 days to complete corrective actions, as required.

DO NOT FORWARD the inspection form to the AU National Office until the loft meets all minimum standards, and any corrective actions have been completed.

A. Inspection Checklist:

1. AU Member. Owner/fancier is a current AU member. ____
2. Loft Surroundings. The loft surroundings should present a pleasant, well kept appearance that contributes to an overall positive décor of the home and neighborhood. Regular maintenance should be evident. ____
3. Loft Location. Where possible, the loft should be placed so as to take maximum advantage of natural sunlight and minimal exposure to potential obstructions such as poles, wires and trees. ____
4. Loft Construction. The loft should be constructed and built to commonly accepted building and AU Competition standards and practices, (when required, appropriate building permits should be obtained). Construction should appear sound with provisions to avoid extreme temperatures, moisture, and disturbance by other animals or pets. Traps should comply with AU Competition Standards, see 16.06. ____
5. Loft Ventilation. Lofts should be built to allow maximum ventilation, however, drafts are undesirable. Airflow and adequate ventilation within the loft are essential to the health of the birds. ____
6. Loft Capacity. The number of birds in the loft will fluctuate with each season, however, the number kept should not be excessive. During the breeding and racing season, it is understood that the number of birds may be increased, temporarily. ____
7. Loft Accessories. There should be sufficient perches to allow each bird to take a perch of it's own. Perches vary in design but should be flat and smooth, with no sharp edges. Taking and keeping a perch is an act of natural competition and socialization for Racing Pigeons. ____
8. Feed, Water, and Grit. Excess feed and grit should be stored in vermin-proof, sealable containers. Feed should NOT be thrown on the floor, overflow the feed tray or hopper, or be left in the hoppers overnight. Except for periods of medication or for disinfection, water fountains should be filled with clean, fresh water morning and evenings, and cleaned daily. The use of "Clorox" as a disinfectant is encouraged. Note: Birds should never be fed before being let out for exercise. Always train or exercise birds hungry to encourage them to trap back into the loft after they are finished flying. ____
9. Next boxes and Nest Bowls. Nest boxes should be large enough to allow the male and female to establish a safe and secure nesting environment and to accommodate activities related to rearing young. Depending on type, nest bowls should be thoroughly sterilized and/or changed between "rounds" of eggs. ____
10. Loft Sanitation. Whether a deep litter, floor grates, or scraped floor method is used, the loft should be generally dry and airy. There should be no odors within the loft or surrounding. Dirt floors create a damp environment and are not acceptable. Birds should not be allowed direct contact with the soil. ____

11. Vermin and Parasite Controls. There should be no evidence of rats, mice or other vermin. External parasites, lice, mites and flies, can transmit diseases that may affect the birds' health and performance and every effort should be made to keep infestations to a minimum. ____

12. Aviary Space. Aviaries should be large enough to allow meaningful exercise and if possible should be open enough to allow the birds to "sun" themselves at will during the day. ____

13. Bathing and Provisions for Baths. There should be provisions for the birds to bathe at least every 10 – 14 days. ____

390.04 Certification Duration. A loft is certified from the date of acceptance of the application by the Certifying Committee and is permanent although it is recommended that the committee visually inspect the loft every year or as determined necessary by the committee.

The Loft Certification may be terminated if any one of the following events occur:

- a.) The owner's AU membership ceases,
- b.) The owner establishes a new or different loft or moves to a different location,
- c.) The committee revokes the certificate "for cause" because it has been shown by the local certifying officers that the minimum compliance requirements are no longer being met.

390.05 Environmental Controls. The AU endorses and recommends basic USDA approved environmental and bio-security protocols. These recommendations are point weighted as per the attached Environmental Controls Form (attached), in an effort to control the possible introduction of disease or disease causing agents to a loft, and to prevent the spread of disease in the case of a disease outbreak.

1. Environmental Controls are voluntary and are considered an indication of proper loft hygiene and management.

2. Environmental Controls are point weighted depending on the seriousness of a specific disease outbreak.

a. Level 1, normal situation, no serious disease outbreak. 10 points minimum.

b. Level 2, serious outbreak in loft or club. 15 points minimum.

c. Level 3, quarantine is necessary due to disease outbreak, 18 points required.

3. Environmental Control inspection may be conducted by Loft certifying committee at the same time as the loft inspection and submitted at the same time.

390.06 Loft Certification and Ordinance Problems. In order to qualify for financial assistance afforded AU members for ordinance issues, lofts must be certified through the AU Loft Certification Program. A letter from club officers and a photograph of the inside and outside of the loft must be received and on file by the AU national office attesting to compliance and healthy loft management. Loft inspection must be within two weeks of date on application.

390.07 Certification Form.390.07 Certification Form. This information is for AU use only and considered confidential. This data will not be shared with any agency without the loft owner's specific, written permission.

LOFT CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST

To demonstrate our industry's ability to self-regulate ourselves and manage our lofts, birds and any diseases that are encountered, the AU has asked all members to voluntarily have their lofts inspected and certified as complying with basic health and construction practices. This provides a tangible way of showing our concern for the health and well being of our birds to the public or any government group, and that we don't require 'outside' regulation. It is easy, costs you nothing but a little time and may improve your loft.

To certify your loft you must comply with all of the following minimum requirements, in the opinion of the local club officers certifying this application and successfully demonstrated that:

Owner/fancier is a current registered AU member. ____

The owner's loft complies with general housing requirements. ____

Loft is compatible with existing, surrounding buildings and neighborhood, and creates a favorable image to the public. ____

The loft surroundings are tidy, sanitary, devoid of unpleasant debris, odors, excess droppings, feathers or equipment clutter. Loft should be generally attractive and compatible with the surrounding neighborhood environment. ____

Loft construction appears sound with adequate ventilation, furnishings and equipment to avoid extreme temperatures, moisture and disturbance by other animals or pets ____

Loft maintenance appears to be adequate and regular, including external and internal repairs, provision for removal of droppings, dust, feathers, nesting material, excess feed, etc. ____

Provisions for feeding, watering, grit and nesting are adequate, sanitary and healthful for the birds present. This includes storage, method of distribution, quantities and types given. ____

Perches, nest boxes and other accessories (like aviaries, traps, lights, windows, etc.) are of sound design, placement and construction so that birds are not subjected to unsafe or overcrowded conditions and are in a controlled environment. ____

The number of birds kept does not exceed the capacity of the loft to adequately and comfortably house those birds, nor does it exceed the ability of the fancier to care for and properly handle and control all pigeons present. ____

Control by the owner of his/her birds while outside the loft appears adequate. Flying and roosting birds are not a neighborhood nuisance and do not present a threat of destruction personal property of others. ____

LOFT CERTIFICATION FORM

Section I – to be completed by member

Member Name: _____ Phone: _____ AU ID _____

Loft Name: _____ Club: _____

Loft Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Member Signature: _____ Date: _____

Section II – to be completed by Certifying Committee (one club official and one member-at-large)

We have inspected the loft of _____ and hereby certify that to the best of our knowledge, the premises and practices acknowledged to use meet the minimum acceptable standards as recommended and set forth in the AU and AWA guidelines.

Officer Signature(s):

Position: _____

Name: _____

Date signed: _____

____ Environmental Control form attached. ____ Inside & Outside loft photos attached.

AU ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROLS FORM

Recommended and suggested protocols.

There are various situations that may cause a fancier to enhance their use of environmental controls. In a normal healthy loft situation, a minimum of 10 points will indicate the loft owner keeps a well managed loft, takes sound precautions and understands basic environmental protocols. In the event of a local, or club health concern, a minimum of 15 points should be earned. Should a loft be in a location where quarantine is necessary due to a serious disease outbreak, a minimum of 18 points should be scored.

Signs posted on your property that clearly state environmental controls are in place and enforced, that visitors are allowed only with the owners present. **Scores 2 points** _____

(Putting up a sign is one of the cheapest ways to put visitors on notice that you have a Biosecurity program, even minimal, in effect. Visitors should wash their hands, and wear appropriate protective clothing.)

Keep a log book for visitors to sign in and out. **Scores 2 points** _____

Wear loft jacket or coveralls. Head or facemask in loft optional. **Scores 2 points** _____

Disinfect shoes when going in/coming out of the loft. (foot bath) **Scores 2 points** _____

Use of booties/foot covering when going in/coming out of the loft. **Scores 2 points** _____

Wash hands before/after handling birds. *Alcohol pads are cheap.* **Scores 2 points** _____

No other species, bird, animal in direct contact with pigeons. **Scores 2 points** _____

Loft is secured or fenced, so there is no free access to pigeons. **Scores 2 points** _____

Disinfect loft at least once annually. **Scores 3 points** _____

Alternatively, use a spray disinfectant throughout the interior of the loft just prior to putting your breeders together. You should spray every surface in the interior of the loft, allow the loft to dry thoroughly, then spray a second time. Adding dormant oil to the spray will also help to control flies, mites and lice.

Skylights installed in roof of loft **Scores 2 points** _____

Ultraviolet light, a major component of sunlight, kills most viruses & bacteria.

Vaccinate all of your birds at least once annually. **Scores 1 points for each of the following:**

Vaccinate young birds at 8 – 10 weeks **Scores 1 point** _____

Vaccinate breeders prior to pairing. **Scores 1 point** _____

Vaccinate old birds on race team. **Scores 1 point** _____

Vaccination for PMV-Paramyxovirus and Paratyphoid once a year stimulates the birds' immune systems, and can help prevent the development of these diseases. Young birds should be vaccinated at 8-10 weeks, and this should be repeated just prior to the young bird races – this schedule allows maximum development of the birds' own immune system. Breeders should be vaccinated 30 days before putting the birds together and old birds on the race team should be vaccinated a month before training for races begins.

Loft has an isolated section in which to contain new birds or those that have become ill, until good health is verified or restored. **Scores 3 points** _____

Loft: _____ **Total Points Scored:** _____

Club Officers/Inspection Committee Signatures:

Date: _____

Send this form attached to the Loft Certification Checklist & photos to the AU office:

ARPU, PO Box 18465, Oklahoma City, OK 73154-0465

405-848-5801