

Pigeons Advice Leaflet

Feral or town pigeons have originated from the rock dove, dovecote and domestic pigeons. Feral pigeons are present throughout Britain, most frequently in urban areas where they have adapted well to the artificial cliffs provided by buildings and other structures.

1. Food sources and the significance of pigeons

They depend largely on the general public for their food. Because of this dependence, the feral pigeons have become a pest fouling buildings, pavements and parkland, contaminating stored food and transmitting diseases. Much of the damage caused by feral pigeons arises from their infestation of buildings, food stores, lofts in factories and the private home. Fouling of buildings and monuments frequently occurs at places where birds roost. The acidic droppings react with chemicals in the stonework which causes erosion of the surface. Accumulations of pigeon droppings can become infested with mites and insects which can infest stored food products.

Some feral pigeons are capable of breeding throughout the year; however, the optimum period occurs between March and July. They build nests on and within buildings. Feral pigeons rely mainly on spillage at food premises or scraps, bread, cakes and birdseed given by the public. The birds normally feed in flocks and have become highly efficient in taking food when it is left unattended, patiently waiting nearby until the area is undisturbed.

Some feral pigeons have been shown to carry organisms that cause Salmonellosis and Ornithosis (a mild form of Psittacosis); although there are proven cases of man catching these diseases from direct or indirect contact with feral pigeons, such risks are slight.

2. Control

The proper proofing of warehouses at doors, windows and ventilators can prevent damage to stored products. The fouling of buildings may be reduced by the use of repellent devices. Various repellents are available including jelly-like substances which makes the surface where applied unattractive to the roosting bird. Loading bays around factories and shopping centers should be kept clean at all times but particularly at the end of the day and weekends. Plastic strips hung in doorways deter pigeons from entering but may not be completely successful. Windows, doors, eaves and balconies can be proofed by plastic netting stretched across or wire placed along ledges a few inches above the surface.

The most important factor determining the size of a pigeon population is food and the best long-term solution to the problem of feral pigeons is to restrict its availability. Avoid dropping food waste and litter, clean up spillage areas, keep lids on bins and secure waste bags. **Remember - no food - no birds.**

The Pest Control section does **not** treat for pigeons. However, officers are available to give free advice on pigeon control and on the steps that can be taken to discourage the congregation of pigeons on buildings. Advice on control and proofing is also available from professional pest control companies many of whom are listed in Yellow Pages and other trade directories.

REMEMBER: The Pest Control section can offer advice on dealing with and preventing pigeons. Telephone 0121 303 6007 for more information or email: publichealth@birmingham.gov.uk.