

PUBLIC PROTECTION – ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

Pest advice - Pigeons

The feral pigeon – an urban pest

Flocks of feral pigeons have become an increasingly common sight in many towns and cities. They thrive in urban areas because there is usually a good food source and also because of the absence of predators. The result is that they can become a pest in built up areas.



What attracts pigeons?

Food litter – More people are choosing to buy from 'fast food' outlets and to eat their snacks and meals outdoors. The amount of food spillage and litter containing food waste has increased in recent years, and this source of food has been exploited by the feral pigeon population.

Feeding pigeons – Feeding is one of the main reasons why flocks congregate around many town centres & shopping areas. Some people feed pigeons in the mistaken belief that the activities of the birds are harmless to humans.

Roosting sites – Vacant buildings, structural defects and building design can all provide attractive roosting sites. Various proofing methods are available to deter roosting.

Pest status

Pigeons cause many problems including:

Fouling of buildings

Fouling occurs where birds nest or roost. Apart from being unsightly, the acidic droppings can erode stonework resulting in costly long term damage. Gutter and drainpipes can become blocked causing flooding. Ladders and fire escapes can become coated with droppings, making them unsafe to use.

Hazards to pedestrians and drivers

Pigeon droppings are a danger to the public as they can cause slippery pavements and roads. Startled flocks will take flight suddenly, causing hazards to pedestrians and drivers.

Encouragement of other pests

The feeding of pigeons attracts rats and mice, which take any uneaten food.

Pigeon nests, droppings and dead carcasses provide a home for a wide variety of insects. These infestations can spread into buildings causing nuisance, damage and skin irritation.

Why pigeons should not be fed

- Human food lacks the necessary nutrients the birds require for good health.
- Feeding attracts pigeons into an area that is potentially hazardous to them, resulting in damage to wings and feet.
- Feeding results in all year round breeding which causes overcrowding in roosting sites, allowing disease to spread quickly within the flock. The birds therefore live in an unhealthy and stressful condition, exposed to parasites and disease which can be passed on to other wild birds.
- Pigeons are wild birds, capable of searching out their own natural food supply. Regular feeding by humans destroys their ability to fend for themselves and makes them dependent on humans.

Pigeon control

The Council does not provide a pigeon control service but has legal powers to deal with activities that attract pigeons. Specialist pest control contractors should be used to carry out pigeon control & proofing work. Details of suitable contractors can be found on the internet, in the Yellow Pages & Thompsons Local Directory.