

Health and Social Services Department
Health Protection, Public Health Department

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Fact Sheet

(NB: Please note this fact sheet is provided for guidance only)



The Pigeon Problem

Feral Pigeons cause millions of pounds worth of damage across the UK every year. The London Borough of Waltham Forest, for example, spends thousands of pounds annually cleaning up pigeon mess from pavements and buildings. The council also enforces residents and businesses to pigeon-proof their properties.

Pigeons roost on ledges, sloping roofs and under bridges destroying insulation, defacing surfaces and blocking pipes and gutters with droppings. Their droppings are acidic and eat away at buildings and machinery, which can lead to secondary damage such as wet rot.

Cases of infection from pigeons may be fairly rare. However, they carry diseases which can prove fatal for humans and pose serious risks to public health, with the young and the old being especially vulnerable:

- Psittacosis, a type of pneumonia, which can kill.
- Candida Albicans which can be the cause of skin diseases.
- Shigella species causes vomiting and diarrhoea.
- Ornithosis, a flu-like disease borne by birds.
- Chiamdiosis, a virus similar to influenza.
- Campylobacter coli, which may cause food poisoning.

Pigeon droppings and dead carcasses can contain a variety of mites and insects which can cause allergic reactions in humans.

A Pigeons Perspective

Although feeding pigeons might appear to be a kind act, it is not.

Food such as bread, cakes and buns give them diarrhoea and induce vitamin B and calcium deficiency. Vitamin B deficiency can cause paralysis in pigeons. Pigeons are scavengers and are well equipped to find their own sources of food.

Food supplied by the public leads to the arrival of more pigeons and increased breeding rates. Feral pigeons deprive other birds of food and spread mites and other parasites throughout their ever-increasing number of breeding sites.

Licensed Pest Control Contractors need to be hired by householders, shops and businesses to exterminate and control pigeons. The kindest and most economically astute way of achieving this is to allow pigeons to continue their natural feeding habits by taking away their dependence on food from people.

Rats

When food is left out for pigeons it is also left for rats. As with pigeons, the more food rats have access to, the more they will breed. Rats are a major health hazard. They contaminate human food with their droppings, urine and hair and are the carriers of many diseases such as; Weil's disease and salmonellosis.

Rats also cause structural damage, burrowing under the foundations of buildings, damaging drains and sewers and gnawing through electrical cables which can cause fires.

What can you do?

Avoid feeding pigeons, allowing them to pursue a natural life of foraging for food.

Food litter should never be left on the ground. Wherever possible ensure that all food waste is contained within enclosed waste bins. If you wish to feed birds, prepare birdseed and place on bird tables where a variety of species can gain access.

It is sometimes possible to scare pigeons away letting them know that a location is not a suitable nesting site. Placing a piece of string with silver foil attached in the allotted area has worked in some instances.

Professional pest controllers may be able to prevent pigeons landing on roofs, balconies and other areas by utilizing many of the products available in pigeon proofing.

Jersey Licensed Pest Controllers

- **Absolute Pest Control-Howard Durell-07707 748 288**
- **Legg & Co-Tony Legg-07797 725 159**
- **Manche Pest Control-Brian Morin-07797 718 214**

NB: Please note The Health Protection Department are unable to make recommendations about individual businesses.