

Pigeons



Aylesbury Vale District Council does not deal with proofing properties, other than its own, to discourage pigeons. If you have a problem, we recommend you contact a local pest control company.

We will, however, act to discourage situations where pigeons become a statutory nuisance, and offer advice as necessary.

Food is the most important factor determining the size of any pigeon population, and the best known, long-term solution to pigeon problems is to restrict its availability.

Origins of feral pigeons

- Feral pigeons are descended from wild rock doves, their populations have increased, especially in urban areas, in recent years. These birds interbreed with escapees from dovecotes and lost racing pigeons.
- Colours and marking vary considerably from blue-grey, through blues, reds, mottled patterns and charcoal to almost pure white.
- Descended from a bird that thrives in a cliff environment, feral pigeons form large flocks that roost on building and ledges and under bridges. They can often be found in loft spaces and empty building – anywhere that offers a small amount of shelter.
- Their preferred diet is grain and seed, but they will scavenge food, take food from bird tables and eat household scraps / discarded takeaway foods.
- Feral pigeons can breed all year round if food is in good supply raising between three and six broods of two 'squabs' a year.
- Nests are constructed of twigs but can also contain rubbish such as pieces of plastic.

Pigeon problems

- **Damage** - pigeon droppings are not only unsightly but are acidic and can cause damage to buildings and machinery. Nesting material, droppings and feathers can block gutters and air vents.
- **Public health** - pigeons carry a range of diseases, some of which may be transmitted to humans if droppings contaminate food stuffs. For this reason their presence cannot be tolerated in and around food premises. They also carry mites which can cause skin disease and dust from their feathers can cause respiratory problems.
- **Accidents** - pigeon dropping and food left down for pigeons can cause walkways to become slippery and dangerous. Startled flocks can take flight suddenly, causing hazards to motorists and pedestrians.

- **Other birds** - large numbers of pigeons can drive smaller birds away from feeding areas . The pigeons also spread disease to other birds, reducing their numbers.

Feeding pigeons

- Pigeons are wild birds capable of finding their own food. Waste food does not contain the essential vitamins the birds require causing ill health and deformity.
- Feeding pigeons attracts them to areas that are not natural to them and exposes them to injury. They are especially vulnerable to attack by cats when encouraged to feeding on the ground.
- Feeding results in all year breeding that causes overcrowding. The birds become stressed causing disease and parasites to spread quickly within the flock.
- Waste food left down for pigeons attracts foxes, rats and mice.
- Pigeons control their numbers very effectively and a reduction in the food supply does not mean the birds will die of starvation, it just means they will breed less often or even not at all.