

# Pigeons



Feral pigeons (or rock doves) are found throughout Britain, mainly in towns and cities where they depend largely on man for their food. Because of this they have become a pest. Their droppings are unsightly and can also be destructive, eroding stonework, blocking gutters and downpipes, and potentially causing people to slip on stairs and pavements.

Feral pigeons can breed throughout the year, peaking between March and July. Young birds become independent after 30 to 37 days and an adult female could produce up to 18 young each year. They can build nests in or on buildings and other structures, normally on ledges, in hollows or under the edge of roofs (eaves).

We need to take action to control the food supply if we are to reduce the number of pigeons. You can help by disposing of unwanted food and food containers responsibly, and not feeding pigeons.

Businesses can also help by carefully disposing of their leftover food. You can help to reduce the problem by following the two simple rules below.

**Do not feed pigeons.  
Dispose of waste food thoughtfully.**

## Five reasons **not** to feed pigeons

### 1 Feeding pigeons affects their health

Feeding pigeons does not help to keep them healthy. The food pigeons get from people usually lacks the essential nutrients pigeons need for overall good health. The risk of injury

to pigeons attracted by people feeding them is also higher. For instance, many pigeons suffer missing and deformed feet after catching them in man-made structures.

The increased food supply can cause pigeons to breed almost all year round. Research has shown that this can place considerable pressure on the limited breeding sites, making many of them unhealthy, crowded places causing physical stress to the birds. Also, mites and other parasites in overcrowded breeding sites can spread disease, and young pigeons are at an increased risk of being attacked by mice and rats attracted to the breeding sites.

### 2 Feeding pigeons makes them depend on people

Feeding pigeons can be harmful because it makes them depend on people for food. Pigeons are wild birds and can fend for themselves.

### 3 Feeding pigeons affects other birds

Feeding pigeons can deprive other birds of food and might scare them from your garden. Smaller birds such as thrushes and finches are often frightened away when pigeons arrive. Feral pigeons can also carry viruses that can be spread to other birds.

### 4 Feeding pigeons attracts pests

People who feed pigeons often end up feeding more than they bargained for. If too much food is provided, pigeons may not eat everything left out for them. The remaining food can attract rats and mice.

### 5 Feeding pigeons puts human health at risk

Humans are also at risk from unhealthy pigeons. Pigeons can carry a number of infectious diseases such as salmonella, tuberculosis and ornithosis (an infection causing pneumonia-like symptoms).

There is a risk that these illnesses can spread to people through contact with pigeon droppings, dandruff and feathers, pigeon parasites, or where dead infected pigeons get into sources of food or water.

They can also cause allergic reactions such as difficulty breathing and rashes.

## How to protect your building

Don't provide homes for feral pigeons.

Pigeons enter buildings to get food, to build nests or simply to roost and shelter. The birds can get in through any opening that is big enough. To protect your home from all birds, you must close all openings that are bigger than 2cm in diameter.

Protecting your building from pigeons includes simple tasks like sealing gaps under the roof and replacing missing roof tiles. (Please remember to remove pigeons before doing this work.)

If pigeons are attracted to your premises, disturb them frequently by clapping your hands or shooing them away. Try putting up home-made bird scarers (for example, strips of silver foil, empty plastic bottles or empty cans on a washing line).

### Pigeon droppings

If pigeon droppings are not cleared regularly, they can cause long-term damage – eroding stonework and blocking gutters and downpipes – and cause people to slip on paths and stairs.

Pigeon droppings, particularly when dry, can cause a health risk. Small and medium amounts can be treated with disinfectant and scraped away, but professional help may be needed to deal with large amounts.

We do not provide a service to control pigeons, but we can offer advice. Phone our Customer Service team on **01702 318111**.

### Rochford District Council

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**01702 318111**