

Wiltshire Council - Fact Sheet

Pigeons

Wiltshire Council do not currently carry out any treatments to reduce pigeons commercially. We do work with other teams in the council to advise on how to protect public buildings and areas. We are also trialing some pigeon deterrent products to look at providing a pigeon proofing service in the future.

Feral pigeons form large flocks that roost on buildings, ledges, sills, sloping roofs and under bridges. They prefer to eat grain and seeds, but have adapted to become efficient scavengers. Pigeons tend to feed where drinking water is readily available and often feed at night in areas with artificial lighting.

If they can find an entrance they will nest in lofts. Feral pigeons may raise between three and six broods a year, and young birds may begin breeding when six months old. It is easy to see why their numbers increase so rapidly.

Potential Harm

- **Damage:** pigeon droppings are acidic and cause damage. Nest material, droppings and feathers can clog drains and air vents.
- **Public health:** pigeons carry many diseases, some of which can be transmitted to humans if droppings contaminate food stores, bakeries or canteens. They also carry a mite which causes skin disease, and feather dust can cause allergic alveolitis or 'pigeon fancier's lung'. Feral pigeon flocks can harbour Newcastle disease which can be passed to domestic poultry if their feed is contaminated by droppings.
- **Accidents:** droppings fouling pavements can make them slippery and dangerous. In cities pigeons can startle motorists and may be responsible for some traffic accidents.

Large numbers can drive small birds away from feeding areas, and may reduce their populations.

What can be done about pigeons?

- **'Pigeon proofing':** tightly stretched polypropylene or galvanised wire netting is often used to stop pigeons nesting. However, if the netting is loose or deteriorating, birds can get in and become trapped. On buildings, a less visible method is to fit rows of spikes, boards sloping at 45 degrees, or sprung and tensioned stainless steel wires across ledges and window sills.
- In warehouses, stores and canteens, rapid roll doors or curtains of heavy duty plastic or rubber strips will let pedestrians and fork-lifts in but keep the

pigeons out. Air blowers, blowing outward, also deter birds. Smell deterrents, high frequency sound, and model birds of prey have very little effect on pigeons.

- Please take care not to displace birds like swifts or house martins, as they are protected. Please contact the RSPB <http://www.rspb.org.uk/> if you would like further information on how to protect these birds..

The best way to control pigeons is to reduce the food supply by persuading people to stop feeding them so that the large flocks disperse, and to put rubbish in secure bins so they can't scavenge. Reducing access to nest sites will also help to limit the population.

To feed small birds in your garden without encouraging pigeons, put all food in feeders rather than loose on the birdtable, or put food for ground feeding birds under a cage with a three-inch mesh size that does not allow pigeons and other large birds to enter but will let in blackbirds and thrushes.