

# Swindon Borough Council

## Pest Control Service

### Fact Sheet



## PIGEONS



### **Pigeon (*Columba livia*)**

- Feral pigeons are descended from Rock Doves and interbreed with racing pigeons and pigeons from domestic pigeon lofts
- The birds roost and nest on horizontal surfaces on buildings and other structures that provide a small amount of shelter. Balconies, flat roofs, ledges, loft spaces and empty buildings are often used if the birds have access.
- Nests are constructed of twigs but can also contain rubbish such as pieces of plastic, they may even be built on or near the dead bodies of other pigeons
- Peak breeding season is between March and July but feral pigeons can breed all year round. Normally 2 eggs are laid with 2-4 broods each year. The eggs are incubated for 18-19 days and the hatched chicks (squabs) are fledged and leave the nest after 30-37 days

### **Disease**

- Pigeons can carry a range of diseases such as salmonellosis, tuberculosis and ornithosis. Whilst there is no direct evidence that the diseases have been passed from pigeons to humans, the risk can not be discounted. Because of their potential to contaminate food and spread disease their presence in and around food premises cannot be tolerated
- Pigeon droppings, nesting materials and dead carcasses can contain a wide variety of mites and insects. These can then infest areas where people live and can then cause skin irritation, disease or allergic reactions.

### **Damage to buildings**

- Pigeon droppings are not only unsightly but can also cause long term damage to buildings
- Droppings, nesting materials and feathers can block gutters and rainwater pipes causing blockages and water damage
- Ladders and fire escapes coated in pigeon droppings become slippery and unsafe to use particularly in wet conditions

## Feeding pigeons

- Pigeons are wild birds capable of finding their own food. Human food does not contain the nutrition that the birds require for good health
- Feeding pigeons attracts them to areas that are not natural to them and exposes them to risks of injury. This is why you often see pigeons with feet and wing injuries
- Feeding results in all year breeding that causes overcrowding. The birds become stressed and disease and parasites spread quickly within the flock
- Large flocks of pigeons can drive smaller birds away from feeding sites. The pigeons can also spread disease to other birds, reducing their populations
- Waste food left down for pigeons can attract foxes, rats and mice

## What you can do to help

- Do not put down food to feed the birds
- If you must feed the birds, feed them small amounts by hand, do not give them more than they can eat immediately
- Do not drop litter, especially food litter
- Keep your property in good repair so that the birds cannot gain access to the roof space
- If you have a balcony make regular use of it, this will help deter pigeons
- If pigeons do gain access to your property, clear away any signs of nest building before the birds lay eggs
- Consider pigeon proofing methods

If you have a commercial premises and pigeons are creating a nuisance through roosting in or on your building please call us on the below number.

**Swindon Borough Council Pest Control Team on 01793 445500**

**Further information on pigeon control services can be found here:**  
[http://www.swindon.gov.uk/environment/pestcontrol/other\\_pests/pigeons.htm](http://www.swindon.gov.uk/environment/pestcontrol/other_pests/pigeons.htm)