FERAL PIGEONS

Large flocks of pigeons are an increasing feature of many town centres, and frequently give rise to complaints of nuisance. They adapt well to most conditions and are able to roost and breed in situations unacceptable to other birds and they are experts in scavenging whatever food is available. They can breed up to 6 times a year producing 2 eggs on each occasion and, as they are not subject to the same dangers as would be found if they were in their natural habitat, their numbers increase rapidly.

Although pigeons are liked and enjoyed by many people, for others, due to their habit of fouling pavements and buildings, they are a source of nuisance and a cause for complaint. However, whilst pigeons have been shown to be infected with such diseases as ornithosis and salmonellosis, there is little evidence to substantiate the claim that they transmit diseases to man.

Over recent years there has been a marked increase in the feral pigeon population as they continue to adapt to town life, with its numerous roosting and breeding opportunities and abundance of discarded food provided by well meaning people. Parts of Redbridge now have particular problems due to the large numbers of feral pigeons attracted to those areas, generally due to the availability of a regular food supply.

The problems pigeons create

The places pigeons roost or visit regularly soon become fouled with droppings, nesting materials and dead birds. These are objectionable and have to be removed. Pigeon fouling, nesting materials and other debris can also contain bacteria, viruses, mites and insects, which could be passed to humans, causing allergic reactions, including breathing difficulties. Apart from being unsightly, pigeon droppings are acidic and if not removed can cause long term damage to buildings. Gutters and downpipes can become blocked causing flooding and dampness to property. Pigeon droppings can also give rise to hazards for pedestrians and motorists, by making pavements, stairways and roads slippery, particularly in wet weather.

The legal position

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, pigeons may be taken or killed by authorised persons, provided that approved methods are used. However, the destruction of pigeons in public places is a very emotive issue that can cause great upset amongst members of the public. It is generally considered to be no more than a ‘quick fix’ solution, and the only effective way to control pigeons in the long term is to remove their food source and prevent them from roosting and nesting on buildings. Pigeon density is very much determined by the availability of a sustainable food supply. A reduction in food will not result in the birds dying of starvation. They will just breed less often or move away to another location.

The Council does not provide a pigeon removal or destruction service.

What you can do to prevent pigeon nuisance

- Please do not feed the pigeons. They will survive without our help and numbers will reduce naturally if we refrain from feeding them. Feeding them too much unnatural food can also do them harm.
- Food left lying around will also attract rats and other vermin.
• Do not drop litter, especially food litter as this will encourage both pigeons and rodent pests.
• Try not to let pigeons use your property for roosting or nesting. However if this does happen, the Council can provide you with advice on proofing your property.
• Do not put refuse out before the day of collection.

Contacting the Service

You can receive further advice on pigeons by contacting the Pest Control Service. You can also request this service by completing the online form.