

THE CONTROL OF PIGEONS POLICY

The control of pigeons is a very emotive subject. Many people see them as part of the natural wildlife of while others see them as a pest and would like to see them removed from our streets and open spaces.

Over recent years there has been a marked increase in the number of feral (wild) Pigeons within Mid Devon. Feral pigeons have thrived by adapting to life; learning to roost and breed within our urban environment making use of man-made structures i.e. open lofts, ledges, window sills, pipe work and parapets etc.

Significance

The fouling of buildings and pathways frequently occurs at places where pigeons roost and nest. Their acidic droppings react with chemicals in the stonework causing erosion of the surfaces and accumulations of droppings can become infested with mites and insects. Pigeons can carry a number of potentially infectious diseases such as salmonella, tuberculosis and ornithosis (a mild form of psittacosis - pneumonia-like symptoms). They are also a source of allergens, which can cause respiratory ailments like pigeon fancier's lung and allergic skin reaction. There is potential for these illnesses to be spread to people through contact with pigeon droppings, dandruff and feathers; pigeon parasites; or where dead infected pigeons get into water sources.

Other problems include the blockage of gutters which can cause water damage by seepage coming into the property, chimneys being blocked causing smoke problems or gasses such as carbon monoxide being forced back into the house all leading to increased costs of maintenance and risk of nuisance to neighbouring properties.

A large number of roosting pigeons can also give rise to odour and noise complaints, not to mention the risk to health and safety in terms of slipping hazards on pavements and fire escapes, from the accumulations of droppings.

Mid Devon District Council does not have a policy to control or cull birds within Mid Devon. Past studies have shown that lethal control programmes are ineffective. They have shown that culling tends to lead to an initial decrease in numbers but this has the effect of increasing the available food supply for the remaining birds thereby improving breeding conditions. In a short time numbers will rise again due to the improved breeding conditions and may even be greater than before. A programme of culling is likely to be considered cruel by the general public and would result in this Authority receiving a lot of poor and damaging publicity.

Generally, the size of a pigeon flock is dependent on the amount of food available. So therefore, 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. So therefore, removing food sources is the single most important factor in reducing the number of feral pigeons in a town.

Advice to be given to the public

Part of our policy is to try and educate and change people's behavior in relation to feeding pigeons.

If someone feels that they must feed birds then it should only be within the curtilage of their own yard or garden, and no food should be left lying around for long periods of time as this can also attract rodents into the area.

It should be explained that:

- 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.

Should a person continue to excessively overfeed pigeons and/or other birds an investigation under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 should be carried out.

Under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, a council may issue a Community Protection Notice if it feels like the conduct an individual is having a detrimental effect, of a persistent or continuing nature, on the quality of life of those in the surrounding locality.

Accumulations of droppings

Should the Council receive a complaint regarding an accumulation of droppings, we would work with the property owners to discourage situations developing where these accumulation of droppings become a statutory nuisance, and we will offer advice towards the proofing of their buildings. There are several methods of discouraging pigeons from roosting on premises e.g. by use of netting and spikes. However, this is a specialist area of work and we recommend you contact a local pest control company, who should be a member of the [British Pest Control Association](#), for further advice and information.

Should this advice not be followed, the Council would carry out an investigation under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Under this legislation, the Council does have powers to deal with accumulations, such as pigeons droppings that may be prejudicial to health and or a statutory nuisance.