

The pigeon that you are most liable to come into contact with is the common feral pigeon (*Columa livia* var) also known as the town pigeon.



## Feral Pigeon

Commonly found throughout the UK, the feral pigeon is roughly 33cm in length weighing anywhere between 280 grams and 560 grams averaging around the 350 gram mark. Colouring varies greatly through the range from its rock dove origins (blue grey plumage with purple neck, double black wing bars and a white rump) through various "blues", "reds", chequered types to almost black. There are no visible differences between the sexes.

Feral pigeons are capable of breeding all year round and nests may be found throughout the year. Their nests are built of any material that they can find consisting of mainly twigs, feathers and scraps such as plastic and wire.

### Sites of nests are usually found in:

- Buildings
- Ledges
- Hollows

### Signs of infestation:

- > The bird itself resting or nesting near or on your property
- > Fouling
- > Nest

As they can breed continually all year round the peak in the breeding occurs between **March and July**. Normally two eggs are laid consecutively with incubation lasting about 18 days with fledging taking place roughly 4 – 5 weeks later. New eggs can be laid as early as the young being 20 days old.

Feral pigeons usually feed together in flocks and mainly rely on people's bad housekeeping for food, this usually being domestic rubbish. The flock will also congregate around food premises looking for spillages.

A major food source is people feeding them directly with food ranging from seeds to bread. The pigeon quite often bullies smaller birds out of food in people's gardens. In some semi-rural areas the birds may fly to arable land and pick and feed on sowings and shoots.

## Reason for control

A reason for control is that the pigeon can be regarded as a carrier and transmitter of disease therefore is harmful to people. A high majority of feral pigeons are infected with ornithosis with some being known to carry salmonellosis and although the incidence is very small the public health hazard cannot be ignored, in view to the pigeons close proximity to food premises. The slip hazard due to droppings on pavements and walkways cannot be ignored especially with the growth of personal injury claims against the business or person that is responsible for the area involved; within this the fouling does look very unsightly especially on new build developments and can cause trouble legally between different parties involved.

The fouling of buildings and monuments occurs mostly where the birds nest or roost, this can have a very destructive effect on the actual object with the acidic property of the droppings eroding the object. Pipes may become blocked leading to flooding problems with fire escapes and metal structures being affected. The risk potential of untreated walkways and such structures could in turn cost your business severely with regards again to lawsuits from injured parties.