



## Feral Pigeon – *Columba livia* var

### Behaviour

Feral pigeons have developed from the rock dove, dovecote and domestic pigeons. They are in increasing numbers in town centres and where they have adapted well to the artificial cliffs of buildings. They depend largely on the public for food and due to this dependence, they have become a pest fouling buildings, pavements, parklands, gardens, contaminating food and transmitting diseases. They mainly feed on scraps, bread, cakes and birdseed given to them by the public.

### Significance

The fouling of buildings and monuments frequently occurs at places where they roost and nest. The acidic droppings react with chemicals in the stonework causing erosion of the surfaces. Accumulations of droppings can become infested with mites and insects. They carry many diseases and can give rise to the following:- Chlamydosis; Cryptococcosis; Campylobacter; Salmonellosis; Erysipelas; Extrinsic Allergic Alveolitis (Pigeon Fancier's Lung); Histoplasmosis.

Other problems include blocked gutters and downspouts 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. Large numbers of roosting pigeons 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 accumulations of droppings.

### Life Cycle

Each Female pigeon generally produces two eggs per lay. The feral pigeon however has become so well adapted to its environment that they can lay up to six clutches per year.

### Control

Removing food sources is the single most important factor in reducing the number of feral pigeons and gulls in the town. If you must feed birds then it should only be within the curtilage of your 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. To scatter food on roads and pavements is an offence under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.