

Controlling Nuisance: Pigeons

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Missouri Department of Conservation

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Common pigeons are introduced birds, thought to have ties with the rock dove, or pigeon, of Europe, Asia and Africa. Over much of the United States, especially in urban areas, they are a nuisance. From a biological, pathological, or aesthetic standpoint, pigeons may be objectionable. They harbor diseases communicable to man, and their nesting and roosting areas are dirty. Many broods are brought off during the year, with birds nesting from late winter throughout the summer to early winter. They have a long life span.

Control

Roosts. Measures to eliminate roosting sites seem costly, but the long-term effectiveness justifies the expense. Openings in lofts and towers, behind signs and under eaves can be screened with rust-proof wire of 3/4-inch mesh that also will keep out sparrows and starlings. Roosting on ledges can be discouraged by wire net covering, or by wood or metal sheathing installed at a sharp angle. Sharp wire projectors and electric wire devices are available commercially to protect ledges and sills.

Nests. Pigeon populations can be reduced by destroying nests and eggs at two-week intervals during the spring and summer months. Use a hook fastened to the end of a long pole to tear down nests.

Scare devices. Noise-making devices have little permanent effect on roosting pigeons because they are accustomed to urban noises. Hosing pigeons with water will move them from roosts. If streams of water or similar controls are effective, they must be used persistently until the birds have moved elsewhere.

Trapping. Pigeons can be taken in live traps placed on flat building roofs where birds roost or on the ground where the birds feed. They enter traps readily, especially during winter when food is scarce. Pre-bait an area with corn or mixed wheat and cracked corn to accustom the birds to feeding in a selected location. Then place the trap, and maintain bait inside with the door rods or bobs tied open with a string. After several days the birds will be conditioned to entering and leaving the trap, and you can remove the string and allow the bobs to close.

Door rods or bobs that open in only one direction allow birds to enter the trap but prevent their escape. Most of the pigeons will be captured in a few days. Several pigeons can be left in the traps to serve as decoys to lure others into the trap. Water should be provided.

Visit the trap every day to remove the trapped pigeons and to add bait as needed. Bob-type entrances similar to designs shown in the printed version of this guide can be built or purchased.

Shooting. A small number of pigeons can be removed by shooting with .22 bird shot, .22 CB caps, or fine shot in small-gauge shotguns where safe shooting conditions exist. Shooting pigeons in buildings such as barns at night with the aid of a flashlight is an effective method of removal. Consult local shooting restrictions and observe safe shooting procedures.

Pesticides. Tactile repellents, sold under various trade names, can be applied to roosting sites such as window sills, ledges, or roof ridges. Applications are made by spreading a bead or ribbon of the compound directly from cartridge or aerosol container. The chemical discourages roosting birds because they find the material tacky and disagreeable underfoot.

Avitrol is a slow-acting poison that causes distress behavior in affected birds. Treated baits should be dispensed so that only a few birds consume the poison. Their behavior then frightens and disperses the remainder of the flock.

Other contact poisons and treated baits are registered for use with pigeons but are authorized only under controlled conditions that prevent their exposure to wildlife. Toxicants can be used only by certified pesticide applicators who have obtained written authorization from the Director of the Department of Conservation.