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Controlling Pigeons

Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service

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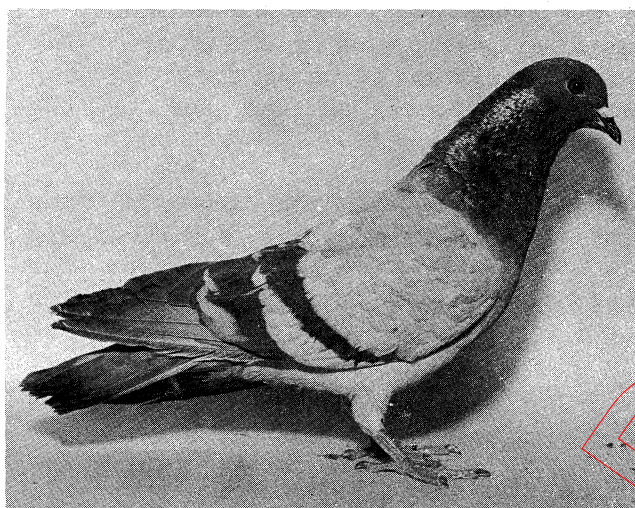
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controlling Pigeons

Developed cooperatively by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service.



Pigeons similar to those now living in a semi-wild state in towns and cities have been closely associated with man since before recorded history. It appears likely that originally these birds came from the blue rock, or common pigeon (*Columba livia*), of Europe, Asia, and Africa. The few birds that are owned by individuals can generally be recognized by numbered bands on their legs and should be returned to their owners.

Feeding of pigeons by bird lovers and grain spillage around elevators, railroad sidings, and feedlots are sources of food for city pigeons. Abundance of shelter assures them places to roost and breed. These factors and a sympathetic or tolerant attitude toward the birds are the reasons for their continued existence. The presence of pigeons affords pleasure to many people. However, excessive numbers of the birds cause property deterioration and constitute a health hazard. Pigeons play a part in the transmission of ornithosis,

encephalitis, Newcastle disease, aspergillosis, thrush, histoplasmosis, cryptococcosis, toxoplasmosis, pseudotuberculosis, avian tuberculosis, salmonellosis, and coccidiosis.

Roost Elimination - Pigeon numbers can be reduced by blocking access to indoor roosts and breeding places. Openings to lofts, steeples, vents, eaves, and the like, should be blocked with wood, metal, glass, masonry or 3/4-inch rustproofed wire mesh. Roosting on ledges, ornaments, and signs can be discouraged by glues, "porcupine wires", electrical devices, 3/4" wire mesh, or netting. These devices vary in effectiveness. While wire mesh is more permanent, netting such as plasticized paper mesh or nylon "mist" nets with lead weights may be cheaper and easier to install. Chemical compounds or "glues" make roosts sticky and uncomfortable for the birds. They can be spread in heavy ribbons on ledges or sprayed on trees. Spray applications are short-lived, but some compounds applied in heavy bands to ledges will remain effective up to three years. The "glues" are messy and difficult to remove from buildings, unless tape is first applied to the roosting areas.

Removal of Nests - Populations of pigeons can be reduced by destroying their 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 under eaves and the like.

Scaring Devices - Noise-making machines are usually disturbing to humans, but have little permanent effect on roosting pigeons. High frequency sound vibrations, inaudible to humans, are usually

ineffective in scaring pigeons. Revolving lights or waving colored flags and balloons likewise have little or no effect.

Shooting Roman candles, firecrackers, etc., into roosts is temporarily effective in moving birds. Streams of water will also move pigeons from roosts. If pyrotechnics or streams of water are to be effective, they must be used persistently until the birds have established themselves elsewhere.

Shooting - There are restrictions against the use of firearms within most corporate limits. Where permissible, persistent shooting with .22 caliber rifles (preferably using ammunition loaded with short-range pellets), .410 gauge shotguns, or high-powered air rifles can eliminate a small flock from a given area.

Birth Control Chemicals - Chemo-sterilants inhibit embryo formation within the egg and temporary sterility results without harming the bird. To be effective, birds must consume a clinical dose every six months. The only effect this chemical has on an existing pigeon

population is to inhibit reproduction. Therefore, its worth as a population reduction agent is questionable. However, it may be of some value in maintaining a pigeon population at a reduced level once the population has been reduced through other means.

Poisoning - Toxic baits are an economical, effective and reasonably safe method of population reduction when used by experienced personnel. These poisons will kill any animal that consumes a lethal dose. Therefore, they must be used carefully to avoid danger to beneficial wildlife, children, pets, and livestock. All dead birds should be picked up and properly disposed. Any unused bait must be picked up and properly disposed at the end of the control program.

Trapping - Pigeons may be taken in traps placed on buildings and other likely locations. Below is a plan for the construction of a pigeon trap. The trap should be constructed in five sections 48" square. The framing may be 1" or 2" lath material covered with 3/4" poultry netting.

Four or five birds left in the trap will serve as decoys to lure more pigeons into the trap. These decoy birds must be provided food, water and shelter. Traps must be tended daily in order to be effective.

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