

# Management of City Pigeons in (large) Cities in Germany



Basics for an efficient, animal welfare-friendly  
city pigeon management in (large) cities in Germany.

– A manual for practical implementation –

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# Introduction

The city pigeon (*Columba livia forma urbana*) populates German cities as a feral, domesticated pet. City pigeons are descendants of escaped carrier and pedigree pigeons. Still today, abandoned or escaped breeding animals are mingling with flocks of city pigeons. City pigeons have adapted in a flexible way, especially to the inner-city conurbations with their diverse, but mostly unsuitable food sources. According to their biology, the so-called rock breeders find attractive breeding sites in the urban building structures.

For a part of the population, the presence of the pigeon in the cityscape is a welcome piece of nature in the cities' often barren concrete structures. For others, however, the pigeon is a problem due to subjectively perceived annoyance. Municipalities are often under pressure from angry citizens, businesspeople, representatives of public institutions and companies specializing in animal deterrence, all of whom demand quick and visible solutions. Hence, they rather fear the costs of every measure and the difficulties of satisfying the conflicting interest groups.

The "city pigeon problem" is significant from two points of view: On the one hand, it is the everyday problem of the pigeon, having to survive as a domesticated pet in the city under conditions that are averse to their species and to animal welfare; on the other hand there is the problem of the municipality to treat the pigeons in accordance with animal welfare and at the same time to reduce the pollution and nuisance caused by them as much as possible. Before the turn of the 21st century it was still the rule to decimate pigeon populations through various killing measures, today such methods are inadmissible due to animal welfare regulations (see Appendix A3) and have also been proven to be an ineffective means of solving the urban pigeon problem.

Therefore, in addition to a feeding ban, many municipalities have also launched programs for animal welfare-friendly pigeon control with the aim of regulating the pigeon population to a level acceptable for the city and defusing the conflict situation with the pigeons. In these concepts, large groups of pigeons are settled in supervised, open dovecotes or pigeon lofts, provided with adequate feed and breeding places. The success of breeding is limited by exchanging the eggs with dummies (according to the so-called "Augsburg model"). Nevertheless, the municipal concepts and their practical implementation usually still have a number of inadequacies. Often, for example, there is a lack of secure long-term financing, suitable locations for the required dovecotes or the lack of coordination to implement an effective pigeon management in the city.

In order to make current or newly planned projects more effective (from the beginning) and to avoid undesirable developments, a conceptual guide for effective, animal welfare-friendly pigeon management is presented here, which builds on previous experience and is intended to make realistic developments possible in practice.

# The City Pigeon Problem and its Causes

For the people	For the pigeon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pollution</li> <li>● Harassment</li> <li>● Costs</li> <li>● Fear of health impairment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Neglected, uncleaned breeding sites</li> <li>● Lack of food and malnutrition</li> <li>● Risk of death and injury when searching for food</li> <li>● Diseases and parasites</li> <li>● Victim of deterrent measures which are in violation of animal welfare law</li> <li>● Victim of cruelty to animals</li> </ul>

## City Pigeons are Domesticated Animals (Pets)

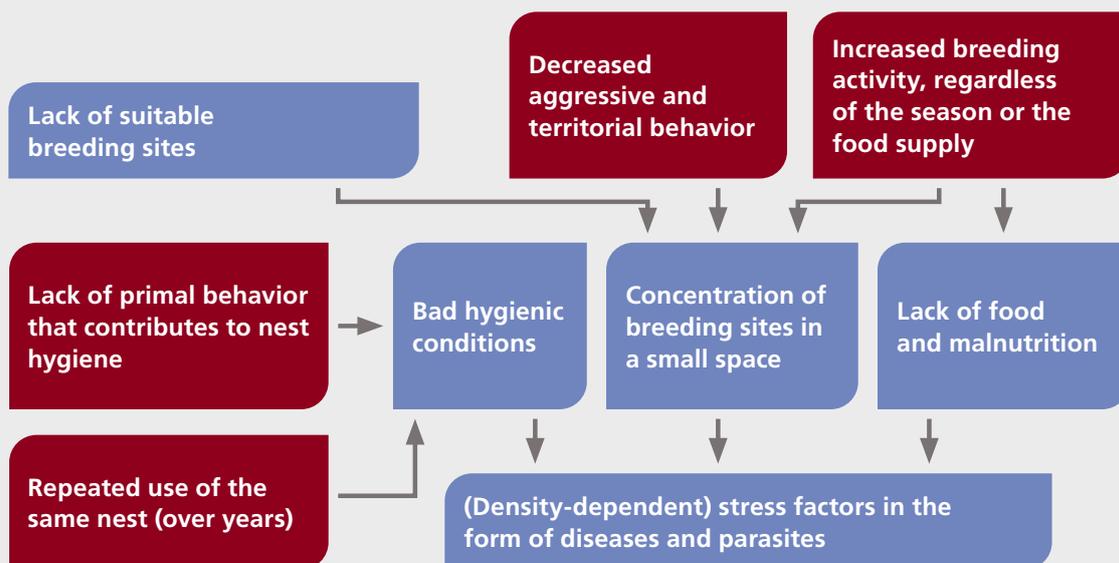
City pigeons are not wild animals. Their domestication began about 5,000 years ago. Through the process of domestication, the animals have certain genetically determined characteristics (see red boxes), which are the main cause of the urban pigeon problem.

Through targeted breeding, pigeons have been adapted to the different needs of humans over thousands of years.

They were used as messengers as well as for the production of meat, eggs, and feathers.



*A group of city pigeons at the station in the south of Frankfurt. The striking color variants are characteristics of domestication.*



# Presentation of an Overall Municipal Concept

The following concept is based on the so-called „Augsburg Model“, which has served a number of cities in Germany for more than two decades as the basis and orientation for measures in the context of pigeon management. The birth control concept was developed by the former Federal Working Group City Pigeons, which was affiliated to the German Federal Association of People for Animal Rights “Menschen für Tierrechte”. It was called the “Augsburg model” or “Aachen model” because these were the first cities in Germany which implemented the concept.

A successful city pigeon management consists of a multitude of measures. It should always be understood and applied as an overall concept. Even if there are reasons that not all measures can be implemented at the same time, the timely implementation of the overall concept should be the goal. With a restriction to only a few partial or individual measures, it is to be expected, that only limited successes can be achieved. There are now some cities that have been able to successfully defuse the situation at the pigeon hotspots or city-wide with the supervised dovecotes based on the “Augsburg model” and in which the costs are deemed justified, and the overall concept has been rated as successful.\*

## Aims

**The following aspects are to be achieved with the overall concept:**

1. Reduction of pollution caused by city pigeons
2. Reduction of the harassment of the human population
3. Stock regulation of the pigeon population
4. Care for and support of the city pigeons
5. Education of the population

## Framework Requirements

**Advanced planning as precise as possible:**

- For this it is best to hire a special person who is to lead and coordinate the city pigeon management (in the future) and who serves as a contact person.
- Meeting with involved and interested persons and institutions (public order office, veterinary office, green space office, animal rights activists, fire brigade, railways, housing associations, shopping centres, waste disposal companies) to check and clarify the general willingness to cooperate on such a project.
- Problem analysis in the city: Identification of hotspots (collection points for pigeons or places with high potential for conflict) and of breeding sites, determination of the sub-populations and the total population as precise as possible, identification of large sources of food and water, analysis of frequent complaints from citizens.
- Obtain expertise if anything is unclear.\*\*
- Carry out long-term resource planning (both with regard to material and personnel).

\* See “Erfahrungen mit Stadttaubenprojekten nach dem „Augsburger Modell“ und Praxisbeispiele – Ergebnisse der Stadttaubenumfrage 2020/2021“, (Experiences with city pigeon projects based on the “Augsburg model” and “Practical Examples - Results of the City Pigeon Survey 2020/2021”, [Report in German]), Menschen für Tierrechte, Bundesverband der Tierversuchsgegner e.V., November 2021

\*\* Menschen für Tierrechte - Bundesverband der Tierversuchsgegner e. V. (Federal Association of People for Animal Rights), Severinusstr. 52, 53909 Zülpich, Germany, phone +49 2252 - 8301210, phone (City Pigeons): +49 3641 - 5549244, E-Mail: stadttauben@tierrechte.de

### Further requirements for a successful concept:

- The city is the main driving force behind the project. It should be financially and personally able to run the project on a long-term basis and, if necessary, to compensate for the loss of other participants (e.g., volunteers).
- Close cooperation between all protagonists and institutions involved, in particular the clarification of responsibilities.
- Continuous analysis of the problem situation and implementation strategy by those involved (e.g., regular “round table talks”).
- Information about the concept on the websites of the city and the authorities.
- Inclusion of the media (local press, TV, radio, social media) to educate the population and to publicize the concept. Citizens can also be asked for support for the pigeon concept and can be advised to whom (resp. to which contact office) they can turn in the event of problems with pigeons.
- Name or create contact points / accommodation options for the (permanent) care of found young pigeons or animals from cleared breeding sites as well as injured animals etc. Establish a time-saving schedule for the efficient care and forwarding of the found pigeons.
- Regularly find out wild breeding sites and close them properly, if possible, or regularly exchange the eggs for dummies.
- Review of the given communal intervention right and its extension or strengthening in order to dissolve wild breeding sites (e.g., with regard to private house owners). Find orientation from models from other German cities (e.g., Thuringian Supervisory Authority Act, § 44, Hazard Defence Ordinance of the City of Speyer, § 4).

## Legal Status of the City Pigeon in Germany – Consequences for Measures of Population Control

According to § 4 section 1 clause 1 of the German Federal Species Protection Ordinance (BArtSchV), city pigeons are among the wild (vertebrate) animals that enjoy a general protection status and are not subject to hunting law in accordance with § 2 of the German Federal Hunting Act (BJagdG). According to these and other provisions of the German Animal Welfare Act (cf. §§ 1, 13, 17), they may not be caught or pursued with traps, nets or in any other way with the result of killing, injury or for any other purpose. Thus, killing or trapping actions to control the population of city pigeons are not tenable. The exchange of eggs from city pigeons, however, is not prohibited and thus represents a method of population regulation in accordance with animal welfare.

For more information on the legal status of the pigeon, see Appendix (A3).

## Supervised Dovecotes

The concept is based on supervised pigeon lofts in which the city pigeons settle. Professional and animal welfare-friendly care is possible there.

### The supervised dovecotes fulfil several tasks:

- By being supplied with food and water, the animals are tied to the dovecotes and spend most of the day there.
- They mainly deposit their droppings in the dovecote, which is regularly disposed of there.
- The eggs of the pigeons are exchanged for dummies in order to regulate the population over the long term.



*Interior views of supervised dovecotes*

- The animals are not forced to stay outside for a long time, for example to look for food in pedestrian zones or at/in shops. This reduces the nuisance of the population and the pollution in the city.
- The animals do not suffer from diarrhoea or liquid feces due to starvation, which causes a lot of cleaning efforts.
- Feeding the animals makes them healthier and more resistant to disease.
- The animal welfare is ensured through regular checks by a veterinarian and the quick care of injured animals.
- Such care corresponds to the state goal of "animal welfare" anchored in the Basic Law of Germany called "Grundgesetz".

**What needs to be considered when setting up supervised dovecotes:**

- City-wide coverage with monitored dovecotes. They should preferably be built at the pigeons' focal points and as close as possible to the pigeons' wild breeding sites.
- Accelerated search for location by the city and other parties involved.
- Reliable care of the dovecotes by competent and paid staff (the help of committed volunteers is welcome).
- Systematic recording and documentation of the egg exchange over the year as well as estimation of the amount of pigeon excrement disposed of per dovecote and year.
- The places for supervised dovecotes should be as easily accessible as possible for the supervisors and have a water connection.
- If possible, use feed suppliers and disposal companies to relieve the support staff.
- When using municipal waste disposal, clarify whether waste should be disposed of on site in the immediate vicinity of the dovecote or outside via the residual waste and whether it is necessary to set up an additional residual waste bin.
- The dovecote may also need extra protection against vandalism.
- The size of the dovecote must be able to accommodate the entire pigeon population, for example a complete flock, and have an additional capacity of 15% to 20% for pigeons that may join them later. In order to avoid stress and illness in the animals, the dovecote should not house significantly more than 200 animals. If necessary, several dovecotes are required near the same location.

- Wild breeding sites in the vicinity of the pigeon loft are to be closed if at all possible or to be scared off professionally and in accordance with animal welfare.
- The dovecotes should be able to be closed from the outside via a locking mechanism (e.g., a flap) in order to prevent the pigeons from leaving the loft in case of need.
- (Lockable) entry and exit openings or boxes should provide a landing area and be located in the upper area of the dovecote, several of them next to each other or, in the case of very wide openings, divided in the middle by a strut. The division helps to prevent blockages by dominant pigeons and is also advisable for openings in building blocks.\*
- In order to reduce the risk of attacks by birds of prey at the entry holes, wooden or metal panels (e.g., in a triangular shape) can be attached to the sides. Also semi-transparent panels (e.g., double-walled panels) can be suitable as a partial roofing of the landing board.

## Types of Dovecotes

There are several ways to integrate dovecotes into the city. Depending on the local conditions and financial possibilities, different variants are possible. Basically, so-called pigeon towers are not advisable. These are very expensive and cumbersome to look after. In addition, their capacity is usually too low, which quickly leads to overcrowding, so that only part of the flock is housed, and the remaining pigeons look for nesting places on the edge or in the vicinity. However, they can complement other types of dovecotes. In the meantime, large, but correspondingly more expensive pigeon towers are also offered. Experience has shown that loft types at great heights (e.g., in attics or on flat roofs) are usually better accepted by the pigeons than lofts near the ground.

All kinds of dovecotes have their advantages and disadvantages:

Type of Dovecote	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Indoor dovecote</b> (e. g., in attics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Easily accessible to staff</li> <li>● Mostly with water and electricity connections</li> <li>● In the anteroom space for the storage of feed and cleaning equipment</li> <li>● No access for unauthorized persons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Difficult search of the location</li> <li>● Partly in the immediate vicinity of apartments</li> </ul>
<b>Dovecote on raised external surfaces</b> (e.g., roofs, terraces, car parks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● See indoor dovecotes, but more flexible and location search a little easier than indoors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● More expensive than indoor dovecotes</li> <li>● Statics may have to be considered</li> <li>● Risk of vandalism</li> <li>● Possibly no electricity and water</li> <li>● Partly in the immediate vicinity of apartments</li> </ul>

\* Viktor Wiese, „Stadttauben im Griff“ (2016) (City Pigeon Problem under Control, [Book in German]), publishing house Eugen Ulmer, 70599 Stuttgart, Germany, ISBN: 9783800107872

Type of Dovecote	Advantages	Disadvantages
Pigeon tower with outside or inside stairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Location search mostly easier</li> <li>● Can beautify the cityscape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Risk of vandalism</li> <li>● Usually without storage room</li> <li>● No connection to electricity and water</li> <li>● Outside stairs very cumbersome for the supervisors</li> <li>● Usually comparatively low capacity</li> <li>● Usually very expensive</li> </ul>
Construction trailer or thermally insulated container	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Flexible location, therefore easier location search</li> <li>● Can be purchased cheaply</li> <li>● Easy access for staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Risk of vandalism</li> <li>● Mostly no electricity and no water connection</li> <li>● If at ground level, possibly less acceptance by the pigeons</li> </ul>

## Nesting Cells and Resting Places

Depending on the size of the pigeon population, there must be enough nesting cells and resting places available. Perches hanging from the ceiling make effective use of the space and should be interrupted lengthways several times due to dominant animals.\* Resting places can be seat boards, triangular seat boards, perches, painters' trestles, and seat blocks. In the nesting cells nest bowls e.g., made of cardboard should be placed. The nesting bowls must not be smooth on the inside. Tobacco stalks can be provided as nesting material (in addition to straw, for example), which should have a positive effect on nest hygiene. There are different ways to build nesting cells for city pigeons (on an existing wall).

For example, the following variants are recommended:

### A) "Shelf" with protruding side walls

The side walls between the nesting cells protrude about 10 cm at the front so that the pigeons cannot see each other so well. Thereby aggressive confrontations are reduced and it is harder for dominant birds to claim several nesting cells. This variant offers the largest number of breeding sites on a limited (wall) space but can lead to more restlessness in the loft than variant B.

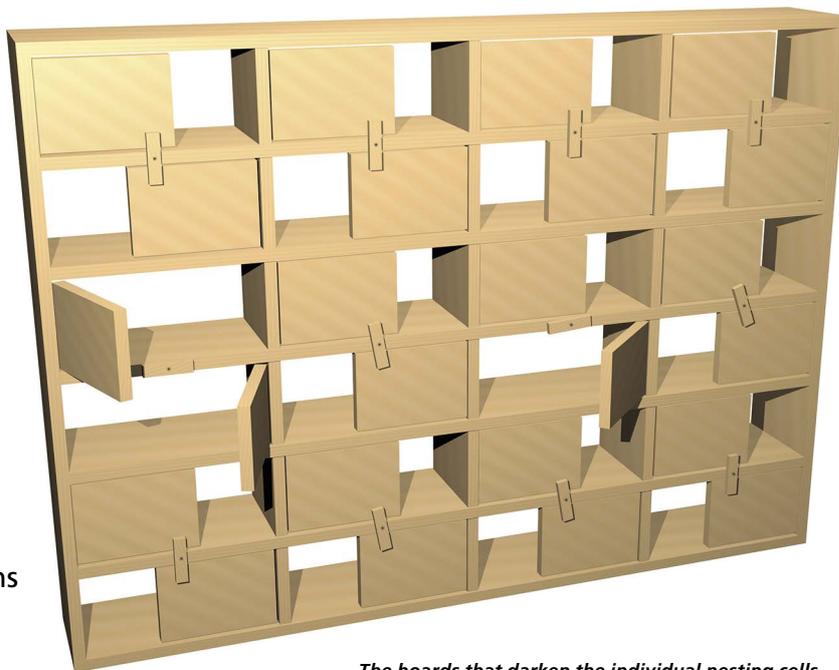
The size of the individual cells should be 35 - 40 cm (width) x 35 cm (depth) x 35 cm (height).



## B) Nesting cells with a darkened half

This form of nesting cell comes closest to the nature of the city pigeon as a former rock breeder and is gladly accepted by them. If the cover is painted in different colours, the pigeons can find their own breeding sites even more easily.

The dimensions of a nest cell should be at least 40 cm (width) x 35 cm (depth) x 35 cm (height). Next to the facing, there must be enough space to allow the pigeons to land.



*The boards that darken the individual nesting cells can be opened with the help of a lever for cleaning.*

## Flooring

There are different experiences with litter on the floor of pigeon lofts. It is not absolutely necessary to lay out a city pigeon dovecote with some kind of bedding. Faeces and leftover feed can be removed from the floor with a floor scraper. If there is no litter, changes in the excrement can also be observed more easily. Litter can bind moisture but must not dust or be easily stirred up by landing pigeons. A litter such as sand or hemp litter is possible, but a cost factor. In addition to the price of the material, the increased disposal volume and the additional time required must also be taken into account.

Occasionally, disposable foils (attached to the floor with adhesive tape) are also used. They can be disposed of with the excrement and then replaced relatively easily, but this is not an environmentally friendly method. For the purpose of disinfection, the floor and other wooden surfaces of the dovecote can be regularly treated with a thin layer of lime or kieselguhr.

## Protective Clothing

When cleaning the dovecote, disposable gloves and protective clothing can be worn, depending on the situation. However, it is essential to wear a face mask in the form of a fine dust mask (at least FFP2), as inhaled fine dust (acutely or on the long-term) can lead to alveolitis ("bird's lungs"), an allergy-related inflammation of the lung tissue.

## Pigeon Feed and Feeding

A good feed for pigeons contains a large number of seeds. Ready-made feed mixes contain, for example, corn, peas, wheat, barley, milo, dari, vetches, millet, cardi seeds, soybeans, oats, rapeseed, linseed, lentils, and sunflower seeds. But you can also mix the feed yourself or add corn and wheat to it.

In addition to the feed, the pigeons should always have fresh water and mussel grit available. An additional dose of vitamins can be useful.

An adult city pigeon needs, depending on the composition of the feed, approx. 35 - 40 g per day. It is important to control feed consumption and, if necessary, adjust it as needed.



*Species-appropriate grain feed for city pigeons.*

In practice, daily feeding with a large number of pigeon dovecotes is hardly feasible, especially for personnel reasons, and there is also the risk that the pigeons will feel badly disturbed when their dovecote is entered frequently. This causes stress and can reduce the acceptance of the breeding sites in the dovecote. An interval of feeding twice a week has proven useful. Which feeding interval is best should be decided or tested depending on the dovecote and the given circumstances. So much feed should always be made available that there will be a small amount left at the next feeding. In any case, it must be ensured that, due to the food available, no wild breeding sites form near the dovecote (if necessary, with the help of appropriate deterrence measures).

Pigeons that live outside of supervised dovecotes can also be fed if their reproduction is influenced, e.g., through supervised breeding sites or sterilization (see p. 12). Regular feeding outside of the dovecotes, however, should not take place in the vicinity of dovecotes (at least 300 meters distance \*) and only in selected locations where the concentration and prolonged stay of the animals does not lead to a nuisance for the residents. Such controlled feeding places must be official exemptions from a feeding ban and require special education of the citizens. They are best looked after by the caretakers of the dovecote.

## Egg Exchange

The pigeon eggs should be exchanged for dummies regularly and as early as possible (before the embryo has developed too far – that is, by the 5th day at the latest \*\*). Commercially available plaster or plastic eggs specially tailored to the weight of pigeon eggs are suitable for this purpose. These dummies should be warmed by hand or in your pocket before being replaced. Now and then (especially at the beginning of the loft colonization) the pairs of pigeons should be permitted occasionally to breed successfully.



*Newly hatched pigeon chick in a rudimentary nest.*

In rare cases it can happen that some pigeons leave the dovecote if they have experienced it as an unsuccessful breeding place for a long time. If there is only one chick in the nest, there is a risk that the chick will develop so-called splay legs if the weight of the parent animals is too high. In particular, smooth nesting bowls can lead to splay legs. Animals with pronounced splay legs usually, depending on the prospects for treatment, have to be euthanized.

\* Elsner S. "Wege zur friedlichen Koexistenz: Konzept zur nachhaltigen Bestandskontrolle bei Stadttauben". (Paths to peaceful coexistence: Concept for sustainable population control in city pigeons, [Article in German]), Deutsches Tierärzteblatt (German Veterinary Journal) 2008 (8):1040–5.).

\*\* As there are no special studies available for pigeons on the onset of pain perception in the embryo, research results on chicken embryos are used as the basis and adapted to the shorter breeding period of city pigeons.

# Sterilization

The minimally invasive endoscopic sterilization of male city pigeons can be a supplementary measure to the supervised dovecotes. The operational risk for the pigeons (depending on the animals' state of health) is considered to be very low and the animals' natural courtship, breeding and territorial behaviour is retained after the intervention.

The sterilization can influence the reproduction of those city pigeons that are not or not yet cared for in dovecotes. Furthermore, this method can also be used in populations that breed in buildings which are at the risk of collapsing, in order to prevent the death of chicks in the event of demolition.

# Deterrence

Deterrence measures as an individual measure do not contribute to the solution of the pigeon problem. They are expensive, usually they do not comply with animal welfare standards and only shift the problem or can even exacerbate it. Scare devices are often not properly installed and are often not checked or serviced. Pigeons and their young, or even songbirds, injure themselves or regularly die of or in improperly installed animal deterrence systems or systems which violate animal welfare.

According to § 13 (1) of the German Animal Welfare Act, it is forbidden to use devices or substances to catch, keep away or scare away vertebrate animals if this involves the risk of avoidable pain, suffering or damage to vertebrates.

There is no independent institution that studies the effectiveness and safety of bird deterring systems. Therefore, many of the defence methods offered on the market are completely ineffective or pose a risk to pigeons and other birds. How successful a deterrent measure is depends not least on the pigeon's motivation and ability to overcome it. If the animals are not offered suitable alternative breeding and resting places, this can lead to animals continuing to try to settle down in the disgusted places or due to a lack of suitable breeding sites to build their nests in spaces which are particularly alien to their species and which are most disturbing for humans.



Oben: In einem Abwehrnetz verendete Jungtauben  
Unten: Tod zwischen Abwehrspikes

However, within the overall concept presented here, certain deterrent measures that correspond with animal welfare and are properly applied serve as an important means of pigeon management (see wild breeding sites).

The following deterrence measures are effective and, if properly installed and regularly checked, are appropriate to animal welfare or reduce the risk of injuries to the animals

to a minimum: Taut nets with a mesh size of no more than 5 x 5 cm (ideally steel nets), metal sheets or perforated metal sheets; for cornices and windowsills: bevelled sheets (so-called birdslides).

Not appropriate with regard to animal welfare are for example live wires and pointed metal spikes. Adhesive pastes are particularly dangerous, they can lead to slow starvation due to sticky plumage. The authorities responsible for animal and species protection in Baden-Württemberg were informed of their violation of animal welfare; other German federal states regulated this by way of a decree.\*

## Wild Nesting Sites

In most cities there are numerous places where city pigeons breed in an uncontrolled manner and under extremely poor hygienic conditions. This can e.g., be places under bridges, attics with broken, open windows or ruins or demolished houses. As a consequence of domestication, city pigeons show less aggressive and territorial behaviour than their wild counterparts. This, together with a lack of suitable breeding sites, leads to a concentration of breeding sites in a small space.

Unlike under human care, these wild breeding sites are not cleaned. Over time, due to increased amounts of faeces and too many young animals in a confined space, density-dependent factors in the form of diseases, parasites, etc. can have a negative effect on the health of the animals.

But city pigeons also die of disease if they don't breed in large groups. City pigeons lack original behaviour that contributes to nest hygiene, such as removing dead eggs or dead young animals from the nest. As a result of domestication, they use the same nests for years, often even when large amounts of faeces or carcasses of deceased young animals have already accumulated.

For hygienic reasons and in order to prevent uncontrolled reproduction of pigeons, wild breeding sites must be consistently closed and properly cleaned. In the case of new buildings, people should be informed that possible seating and breeding opportunities for pigeons should be avoided or kept to a minimum. Before wild breeding sites are closed or cleared, existing young animals must be rescued and housed in an animal-welfare-friendly manner. Ideally, the eggs are exchanged before the sites are closed until there are no more young animals.



*Above: Wild breeding ground in a neglected place.  
Below: Pigeon chicks in a dirty wild breeding site.*

\* See Executive department of the state animal welfare officer for animal welfare in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, Activity Report 2019, [Report in German]

The subsequent deterrent device must be properly installed and regularly checked. Grids are suitable, steel nets or metal sheets. Bevelled sheets are suitable for deterring birds from resting places.

In some cases, wild breeding sites can be converted into supervised breeding sites or even into supervised dovecotes, especially if there is a large population. Basically, as many eggs as possible should be exchanged in wild hatcheries. In addition to attics, parking garages, backyards, balconies, and some bridges are particularly suitable for this.

## Costs

The costs for the implementation of an overall concept for pigeon management are variable and depend on various factors. A major role plays for example the size of the city, the number of focal points, the staff, the type of dovecote, etc.

There are one-off costs, such as building and equipping the dovecote. The equipment costs include for example nesting cells, feeding troughs, water dispensers, pigeon egg dummies and cleaning devices. Furthermore, there are also running costs, such as feed costs, personnel costs, protective clothing, veterinary costs, costs for grit, pigeon egg dummies and disinfectants. The feed costs per pigeon are approx. 0.80 Euro per month (with 35 – 40 g feed per pigeon per day and a feed price of approx. 0.70 Euro per kilo).

The responsibility for the financing of the overall concept should basically lie with the city. This is the only way to guarantee reliable and long-term implementation. In addition, attempts can be made to acquire funds for financing by means of project sponsorship, involving the national railway company, housing associations, shopping centres, interested companies and affected businesspeople as well as citizens (advertising opportunities on and with dovecotes).

One of the goals of the city pigeon concept is that the nuisance of the population is reduced, and the reputation of the city pigeon is improved. In order to keep pollution from pigeon droppings to a minimum, cleaning measures should therefore be carried out regularly and urgently, especially in public places with adjacent restaurants. This is another cost factor.

### **One-off and running costs within the overall concept are:**

- Supervising staff
- Disposal company or, if necessary, additional residual waste bins
- Construction and equipment of the dovecote
- Pigeon feed
- Closure of wild breeding sites (in the case of urban properties or in cases in which the property owner responsible for the assumption of costs cannot be called in, but the closure of the breeding site in question is urgently required for the implementation of the concept)
- Sterilization
- Medical care for the pigeons
- Admission points and care/rescue station for pigeons in need of help
- City cleaning
- Public relation

## Examples of Costs for Different Kinds of Dovecotes

The **construction costs** vary depending on whether the construction is mainly carried out by volunteers or by specialist companies (e.g., carpenters) and whether architects or structural engineers are required.

The **feed costs** vary depending on the number of pigeons living in the dovecote (occupied breeding sites), the quality of the feed and the amount of feed purchased from the trade.

### Costs for supervising staff

The caretakers of a dovecote must be competent or trained accordingly. In addition, they must be reliable and usually also physically resilient.

Permanent employees and mini-jobbers can be supplemented and supported by volunteers and in Germany by "one-euro" jobbers.

The personnel and **veterinary costs** are usually divided between the several dovecotes cared for.

#### Indoor Dovecote (attic):

Size:	approx. 30 m <sup>2</sup>
Number of breeding sites:	150
Expansion costs:	5,600 € (Euro)
Equipment costs:	300 €
Feed costs:	300 €/month
Disposal incl. feed delivery: (by a non-profit company)	200 €/month
Personnel costs: (450 €-jobbers for 2 dovecotes)	225 €/month

#### Dovecote on the outside (mobile dovecote):

Size:	approx. 18 m <sup>2</sup>
Number of breeding sites:	50
Building costs:	11,420 €
Equipment costs:	1,420 €
Feed costs:	420 €/month
Further maintenance costs:	120 €/month
Disposal costs (bin):	15 €/month
Personnel costs: (Allowance for volunteers)	60 €/month

#### Dovecote on the outside:

Size:	approx. 24 m <sup>2</sup>
Number of breeding sites:	130
Building costs:	10,000 €
Equipment costs:	250 €
Feed costs:	300 €/month
Personnel costs: (Allowance for volunteers)	60 €/month

#### Pigeon Tower:

Current construction costs for a model with external stairs:	approx. 50,000 €
Model with internal stairs:	approx. 70,000 €
Plus, equipment and running costs.	

The amounts in Euro are rounded average values.

# Feeding Ban

Most German cities have feeding bans. These are supposed to prevent humans from feeding the pigeons with any kind of food. However, it is hardly possible to enforce this prohibition. People who want to feed pigeons on a regular basis can usually not be deterred by prohibitions.

Also, city pigeons do not survive primarily due to actions of deliberate pigeon feeding, but they can fall back on numerous kinds of waste in the city, such as occur in abundance in outdoor gastronomy. Passers-by who carelessly throw away their leftover food think just as little about the pigeon problem in the city as do families with children or the elderly who lure pigeons and mostly water birds to them with food.

As an individual measure, a feeding ban has hardly any influence on the pigeon problem in a city. Experience has shown that it also leads to conflicts in the population, a negative attitude towards city pigeons and even encourages cruelty to animals.

If it were possible to close all food sources in a city for pigeons and to enforce a feeding ban consistently, this would result in a killing measure by starvation. This form of population reduction is associated with considerable suffering and pain for the animals and is not compatible with the Animal Welfare Act. Since city pigeons as domesticated pets are dependent on waste and human feeding, numerous young animals and also adult pigeons die of lack of food or malnutrition under the current living conditions in the city.

Hungry pigeons also increase the nuisance of the population and businesspeople considerably. For example, the animals sit on tables, pick up leftover food directly from the plates, walk through busy pedestrian zones, wait above cafes, and dirty tables and chairs, walk into bakeries and supermarkets, where it is difficult to pick them up again, etc.

As part of this overall concept, a feeding ban can be used as an accompanying instrument if the animals in supervised dovecotes are offered alternative and species-appropriate feed and the human population is informed accordingly. With the help of the ban, for example, attempts can be made to prevent wild feeding in the vicinity of the dovecote or in particularly sensitive areas in the city. This is also an attempt to keep unsuitable food away from the animals.



*Above: City pigeons begging for food.*

*Bottom: City pigeons are forced to feed on garbage on the street.*

# Education of the Population

The chances of success in the implementation of the pigeon concept can be increased if as large a part of the city's population as possible is won over to the concept through information and awareness-raising campaigns. In addition to addressing the population by using electronic and print media, e. g., also information boards and brochures/leaflets should be taken into consideration, which can be attached or distributed directly to the pigeon focal points. In terms of content, according to the concept presented here, reference should be made to animal welfare, the renouncement of pigeon feeding and the possibilities of avoiding nuisance and pollution by the animals (e.g., prevention of wild breeding sites, no swarm concentration caused by feeding). In order to enable committed citizens to help with the overall concept, egg dummies can also be made available to individuals free of charge (this can, for example, reduce the number of broods on balconies).

Information on the biology of the city pigeon (e.g., with regard to behaviour and way of life) as well as truthful information about the minor health risks (see Appendix A7) that the animals pose help to reduce prejudice and rejection. Furthermore, animal welfare violating deterrence measures (e.g., adhesive pastes) should be explained and appropriate alternatives should be referred to. It is also important to indicate a point of contact (which can be reached by telephone), to which citizens can turn if they have problems with pigeons (e.g., wild breeding sites in their vicinity, injured pigeons, or helpless young animals).

Both the city (e.g., via its homepage) and the animal welfare organizations and individuals involved in the concept can provide information and clarify, in particular about the progress of the (long-term) concept. There are no limits to the creative design in this regard. On the homepage [www.tierrechte.de](http://www.tierrechte.de) we offer leaflets and brochures [in German] with both short or detailed information about the city pigeon concept that corresponds with animal welfare.



*Dovecote and aviary of a rescue station for injured pigeons and found young animals.*

# Success Control

The effectiveness of the concept should be checked at intervals in order to provide evidence that can justify further investments and to intervene in the event of possible problems. In order to determine the success of the implemented measures of the concept, several success parameters can be checked (the list can be expanded):

- Number of eggs exchanged
- Amount of faeces disposed of
- Decrease in harassment
- Decrease in complaints, e.g., at the regulatory office
- Decline in the presence of pigeons in the (previous) hot spots and also across the city
- Declining population development at certain hot spots
- Declining development of the total population

At the beginning, even the settlement of a new dovecote can be evaluated and documented as a success parameter. A record should be kept of the number of eggs exchanged in each supervised dovecote. In addition, the amount of pigeon droppings disposed of can be estimated (or even weighed with a spring scale) (droppings that are no longer on the street). In addition, surveys in the population (e.g., at a specific focal point) can provide information on whether the relieving effect of the concept is also noticed by the population. The decrease in the daily presence of pigeons in a city or at a hot spot can also show the success of the measures. For most citizens, the actual total number of pigeons in a city hardly plays a role as long as they are living in dovecotes and are hardly perceived as a nuisance.

The repeated counting of the total population (e.g., every 2 years) can show the development of the number of pigeons in a city. However, since counting the total population is very complex and cannot always be implemented in practice, individual focal points can be counted instead, and the course of the population development can be documented on these. If the pigeons in the dovecote are ringed, it is easier to determine whether and how many non-resident pigeons visit the dovecote. In addition, it can be observed whether and where the pigeons who wear rings are when absent in the dovecote. In addition, it can be recorded whether pigeons have migrated from the dovecote when they are found again at other breeding sites in the city. However, a ring is not absolutely necessary for the success of the concept.

In order to examine and optimize the animal welfare-friendly city pigeon management in Germany or elsewhere more in detail, a scientific investigation of individual questions and the effects of the concept in individual cities would be desirable. This can be done in the form of scientific work (e.g., master's degree, doctorate).

The Bundesverband Menschen für Tierrechte (The Federal Association of People for Animal Rights) would very much welcome the transmission of the collected data on the city pigeon projects carried out throughout Germany and abroad.

# Checklist: Establishment of Supervised Dovecotes

## (10 Point List)

- 1) Carry out a careful analysis of the pigeon problem in the city (pigeon counting, identifying hotspots and conflict zones, analysing citizen complaints, clarifying rights of intervention regarding wild breeding sites in private buildings and expanding them, if possible, etc.).
- 2) Demand and realize the implementation of the overall concept for pigeon management.
- 3) Develop detailed targets within the framework of the concept (if possible, using a manageable time frame) and implement them.
- 4) Establish an effective cooperation structure, if possible, under the leadership of the city (considering the clarification of official responsibilities, involvement of committed citizens and of animal welfare organizations, etc.).
- 5) Ensure the solid and long-term financing of personnel and material expenses.
- 6) Intensive location search for dovecotes in public and private buildings.
- 7) Build dovecotes as close as possible to pigeon focal points, ideally close to breeding sites.
- 8) Implement/create and document the core tasks of the supervised dovecotes.
- 9) Pay attention to the animal welfare-friendly implementation of deterrent measures and removal of wild breeding sites.
- 10) Carry out intensive public relations work, make citizen participation possible and demand it.



## Problem-Solving Approaches for Ongoing Projects

In the implementation and further development of projects with supervised doves, difficulties and inadequacies arise, which are not easy to remedy and usually lead to increased work and increased need of financial resources. These problems should be viewed as remediable “disruptive factors” that have to be addressed due to changing conditions as part of the project progress.

The problems cities have already experienced mainly include the following aspects:

- Although necessary, an overall concept is not implemented.
- Suitable locations for doves are not found.
- The budget is insufficient, and the allocation of costs remains unclear.
- The cooperation between the project participants does not work or does not work well.
- There is a lack of efficient care for the doves.
- The care for found/injured pigeons is not guaranteed.
- Wild nesting sites are difficult to close.
- The feeding of pigeons outside of the doves can hardly be controlled.
- Pollution and harassment from pigeons and complaints from the population continue.
- There are still animal deterrent measures in place which violate animal welfare.
- The unclear legal status of the pigeons blocks decisions and measures for the project, etc.

For the implementation of the project, the solution to each of the problems mentioned here can have a different weight, and these problems are often very city-specific, so that this manual cannot provide detailed solutions. Rather, it serves to present guideline criteria by means of which the project can be accompanied and checked for its effectiveness.

Therefore, only three examples are used to show how implementation problems can be clarified and tackled with the help of this manual:

### Example 1

#### **An overall concept for the city could not be implemented**

Possible reasons:

- The significance of the overall concept compared to individual measures has not become clear to all those involved.
- There are fundamental reservations about an overall concept (e.g., because it cannot be implemented for various reasons).
- Financial and human resources are lacking or are not made available for the implementation of the overall concept.
- The cooperation structure does not work.
- The overall concept was poorly prepared or planned, etc.

Possible solutions:

- Check the specific prerequisites for an overall concept again, if necessary, seek professional help and advice.
- Make the (new) aspects available to all those involved in the concept.
- If necessary, realign the coordination office and gain more supporters.
- Strive for an improved financing structure (e.g., in terms of an appropriate distribution of costs between the city and private donors, increased acquisition of sponsorship money).
- Review the city's rights to intervene with regard to wild, hygienically questionable breeding sites on private land and private properties and strengthen them, if possible (e.g., following the example of other German cities that have already been successful), etc.

## Example 2

**Despite the feeding ban, pigeons are still fed outside of the dovecotes**

Possible reasons:

- The feeding ban has no effect on certain people who feed the animals, or based on experience, is not enforceable.
- Feeding by urban residents or strangers is both intentional and unintentional, usually as a spontaneous and unthought-out act, as the people who feed the animals are unaware of the negative consequences for the animals and the rest of the urban population.
- The amount and type of feeding are very often related to excess food or waste in the course of consumption at gastronomic places and transport hubs of the city.
- There is often a lack of easily accessible, multilingual, and factually appealing information on the negative aspects of pigeon feeding as part of an overall concept (e.g., in the city's brochures on ecology and animal welfare, also for tourist target groups).

Possible solutions:

- Each additional dovecote reduces the pollution of the city as well as the number of foraging, begging pigeons. All those involved in the concept should also be aware that there is uncontrolled pigeon feeding with the existing and with each newly opened "gastronomic hotspot" (e.g., in public places, on the traffic arteries of the suburbs and districts).
- This results in higher requirements and higher costs for the regular removal of pigeon droppings.
- The catering establishments and neighbouring companies should be informed about this connection (including by personal contact).
- In the course of an overall concept, the city population should be informed about possible negative consequences of feeding, etc. with information material (e.g., brochures, information boards), especially on site.

## Example 3

There is no concept or offer for medical care for found young animals and injured pigeons

Possible reasons:

- The importance of this problem was not seen in advance or was neglected.
- The assumption of the costs for this could not be clarified.
- There is a lack of a suitable support point for this task and there is a lack of personnel to operate it as an official contact point, etc.

Possible solutions:

- The missing concept of a rescue centre should be reworked and integrated into the overall concept.
- Emphasis must be put on the fact, that the city has a legal responsibility in the context of animal welfare for found and injured city pigeons as well.
- Forceful search for supporters and potential sponsors of such a rescue centre.
- Use of advice and helpful know-how from third parties.
- Establishment and organization of an effective network for the reliable forwarding of the found animals and (medical) care, etc.



*Painful constrictions like this are common in pigeons. They can lead to the death of the toes and require veterinary treatment. They are caused by twine, cord, hair, and the like.  
Photos: Stadttaubenprojekt Frankfurt e. V.*

# Legal Status of the Pigeon in Germany – Implications for Population Control Measures

The concept described in this manual for the municipal population control of city pigeons corresponds to the German legal situation.

According to § 4 section 1 clause 1 of the German Federal Species Protection Ordinance (BArtSchV), city pigeons are wild (vertebrate) animals that enjoy a general protection status and are not subject to hunting law according to § 2 of the Federal Hunting Act (BJagdG). According to these and other provisions of the Animal Welfare Act (cf. §§ 1, 13, 17 (TierSchG)), they may not be caught or pursued with traps, nets or in any other way with the result of killing, injury or for any other purpose. A different legal regulation can only be considered in the context of a so-called pest control in certain single situations.

In addition, a higher nature conservation authority (Germany's "Obere Naturschutzbehörde" like a ministry, regional council) can only permit exceptions to the special legal prohibitions of § 4 (1) BArtSchV under very strict conditions, insofar as it is necessary to avert significant forest, fishing, water, or other public utility damage or if necessary due to the species protection of animals and plants.<sup>[1]</sup> Trapping pigeons as so-called "pests" is also subject to authorization in accordance with § 11 of the TierSchG and, in accordance with § 4 (3) of the BArtSchV, requires a prior official exemption. This can only ever be a specific individual case decision by the authority; a general permit, for example to control feral domestic pigeons, is practically impossible to derive from the exceptions to the rule, since dangers caused by city pigeons are generally recognizably and demonstrably non-existent in the context of this legally required significance.<sup>[1]</sup>

In Germany, animal welfare is a constitutional goal of the state (Art. 20a of the Basic Law (GG)).

It is true that the German jurisprudence finds it difficult to come to a different regulation with the aid of the state goal of animal welfare for questions that are legally regulated with sufficient certainty; in these cases, jurisprudence says that the state goal is directed at the legislature and the courts cannot do anything as long as the legislature does not adapt its regulations to the state goal. The assessment of the legal situation is different in the case of public tasks that are not regulated by law, such as the setting up of dovecotes here.

It is the prevailing legal opinion that the state goal in the sense of a discretionary guideline obliges to choose from several ways suitable for the fulfilment of the respective public task for the one which preserves and promotes the life, the well-being, and the integrity of animals most closely. The question "How does a municipality behave towards city pigeons" is not regulated by law and therefore falls into this area in which the municipality has to opt for the more animal-friendly route.

For decision on measures to control the population of city pigeons in Germany the ruling of the Administrative Court of Justice (VGH) Kassel<sup>[2]</sup> is significant, according to which the presence of abstract health hazards is sufficient as a "reasonable reason" for killing in the context

[1] Maisack, C. (2016): "Tierschutz; Fang verwilderter Tauben (Stellungnahme)" (Animal Welfare; Catching Feral Pigeons (Statement), [Article in German]), Ministry for Rural Areas and Consumer Protection Baden-Württemberg, Germany, file number SLT-9185.67

[2] Hessian Administrative Court, judgment of September 1st, 2011 – 8 A 396/10 –, juris

of pest control (margin no. 27 and following). However, such an abstract danger is only given when flocks of city pigeons appear.

The court continues:

“This is the case with swarms of around 10 animals per 100 square meters of floor space. Regardless of whether the pigeons appear in the flock, they are also pests if, according to the assessment of the competent authority for the respective location (health authorities, trade supervisory authorities), reasons of health protection or occupational safety preclude the toleration of the pigeons. This also applies for the case of the threat of damage to buildings due to pigeon droppings, moreover also for listed buildings if, according to the assessment of the competent authority, no other building protection measures are reasonable.”

However, this rating is contested both legally and scientifically. For example, through two statements by the German Federal Office for Consumer Health Protection and Veterinary Medicine (BgVV) dated February 26, 1998, and July 20, 2001, according to which the health risks posed by city pigeons are not to be assessed as greater than those caused by ornamental and wild birds or by farm animals and pets. There was also legal criticism that the court did not “weigh up the interests of the animal and the understandable, reasonable and worth protecting interests of humans in the expression of the principle of proportionality”.<sup>[3]</sup> p. 27 The Federal Species Protection Ordinance was also not taken into account in the decision.

Also unsuitable is the limited killing permitted by the VGH, because it does not reduce the population sustainably and “[...] as a result the survivors’ offspring rate [increases].”<sup>[4]</sup> S. 29 “Already a few weeks after the killing the original size of the population is reached again.”<sup>[4]</sup> S. 29 Catching and killing are not necessary, because milder and long-term more effective measures for pigeon control such as supervised dovecotes with birth control through egg exchange are available.

It is also against the animal welfare and disproportionate that “the capture and/or killing of reproductive animals [...] predictably [leads] to nestlings of killed parent animals starving/freezing to death and thus exposes them to persistent, considerable suffering within the meaning of § 17 no. 2 of the Animal Welfare Act (TierSchG) [...]”.<sup>[5]</sup> margin no. 56, p. 509

Other “control measures” would also end with a similar consequence if the animals were systematically deprived of all (wild) sources of food accessible to them, since in this case the young animals would die first of starvation or malnourishment.

But even if the standards of the VGH Kassel are applied, a trapping and killing measure is only conceivable if the massing of pigeons can be observed and documented for a long time and only with close monitoring of the trapping process.<sup>[6]</sup>

Other reasons that are often put forward as “reasonable” for “fighting” the pigeons such as: property damage caused by pigeon droppings, pigeons as disruptive factors in pedestrian zones, contamination of freely laid out or transported food or cost savings by reducing the number of pigeons, even according to VGH Kassel cannot be decisive for reasons of lack of proportionality, since these problems can be countered by means other than killing in a reasonable and responsible manner with regard to animal welfare.

[3] Schönfelder, R. (2017): “Gehn ’mer Tauben vergiften im Park? Zum Umgang mit Tauben aus strafrechtlicher Sicht, in: Natur und Recht”, (Going to poison pigeons in the park? On dealing with pigeons from a criminal law perspective, in: Nature and Law,, [Article in German]) Volume 39, Issue 1, pp 26 - 32

[4] Haag-Wackernagel, D. (2016): „Tauben in der Stadt. Tierschutz beider Basel” (Doves in the City. Animal Welfare, Basel, [Article in German])

[5] Hirt, A., Maisack, C., Moritz, J. (2015): “Tierschutzgesetz: TierSchG”, (Animal Welfare Act) Commentary, 3rd edition [Book in German], publishing house Franz Vahlen

[6] So amongst others, at least 1 daily check, Administrative Court at Wiesbaden (VG), Germany, judgment of August 16, 2012 – 4 K 330/12.WI –, juris., Rn. 89

## Methodical Approach to Pigeon Counting

In a (large) city pigeons are usually not evenly distributed over the urban area. There are certain places where the animals gather in groups. Most of the time, the animals are looking for food in swarms of different sizes, mainly at certain places in the city, at so-called hot spots. Experience has shown that the pigeons stay at these places for a large part of the day. Their breeding sites are usually in the immediate vicinity.

In the run-up to a census, all pigeon focal points in a city where the subpopulations are located should be determined and examined for peculiarities relevant to the count. When counting the total population, the number of pigeons should be recorded at as many focal points as possible at the same time (to avoid double counting) through one or, in the case of very large or confusing focal points (e.g., train stations), several people and entered in a corresponding data sheet. The number of pigeons present should be recorded at least twice a day at a certain time.

If there is a lack of personnel to count the pigeons at all focal points, average values from the other focal points counted can be used. The persons must be assigned their respective counting location on a separate date and the procedure for counting and the use of the aids and the data sheet must be explained.

If there is a large number of animals to be recorded or if the distance to the counting person is too great (e.g., on roofs), photos are taken. The photos can be enlarged in an image processing program on the computer and provided with guidelines or dots to make counting easier.

To determine the total number, all pigeons recorded at the counting locations at a certain point in time are added up.

If there were different counting times (on a day), the counting time with the largest total is used to calculate the total.

The calculation and estimation of the total population is made up of the counts of the examined focal points including an estimated number of unreported cases and a counting error rate.



*Example of a photo evaluation (excerpt).*

As basic information for the difficulty to estimate the size of the dark figure of pigeons for the entire urban area, it can be assumed that a considerable part of the population is withdrawn from the counters due to the breeding business of the pigeon partner, which always runs parallel to the search for food. Here it can be assumed that the population is around  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the population of a focal point. The remaining quarter is made up of young animals and

those without partners. Another factor that increases the number of unreported animals is that there are isolated pigeons and small groups of pigeons that do not live in the focal points. A serious estimate for these pigeons can usually not be given due to a lack of evidence.

A possible counting error is that pigeons at the counting location are overlooked during the counting process (being invisible, but present) or that pigeons in a flock that usually lives at the focal point are accidentally not found. For this, an error size of 5% to 10% can be assumed for all focal points.

**Sample calculation:**

At 5 focal points, 100 pigeons each were counted at the same time.

At other 3 focal points no counts could be made.

$500$  (5 focal points) +  $375$  (3/4 as unreported dark figure) +  $25$  (5% counting errors) =  
900 individuals

$300$  (100 (Ø figure at a focal point) x 3 focal points) +  $225$  (3/4 as unreported dark figure)  
+  $15$  (5% counting errors) = 540 individuals

Estimated total population: 1.440 individuals

# Example of a Counting Data Sheet

## Data Sheet for the City Pigeon Count in Wiesbaden, Germany

Counting Location: **Dern Terrain**

Name of the Counter:

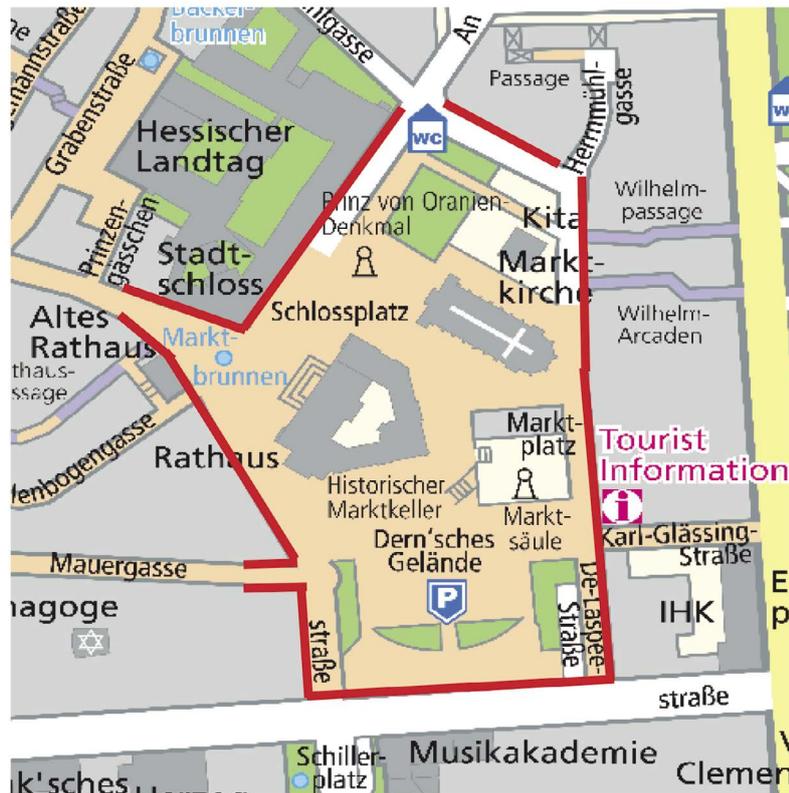
### 1st Count

Time of counting	11:00 a.m.	11:45 a.m.
Number of pigeons		

### 2nd Count

Time of counting	03:00 p.m.	03:45 p.m.
Number of pigeons		

F = Photo



# Exemplary Photos from a Dovecote



## Actual Health Hazard from City Pigeons

This information can be used to educate citizens about the very low risk of disease transmission from city pigeons.

According to the German federal authorities the health risk posed by pigeons is no greater than that from ornamental and wild birds as well as from livestock and pet animals.<sup>[1]</sup> Therefore pigeons cannot be regarded as pests in general within the meaning of the Infection Protection Act. The risk of infection with diseases that can be transmitted to humans is estimated to be very low.<sup>[2]</sup> People with a reduced immune status should observe special hygiene rules as well as when dealing with other animal species.

A health risk, which is spread among other things by pest control companies, has been refuted several times, a veterinarian reports<sup>[3]</sup>:

- **Trichomoniasis:** In humans, it is a sexually transmitted disease. The disease of the same name in pigeons is a different type of pathogen that affects the goiter of the animals and which humans cannot become infected with.
- **Parrot disease (chlamydiosis / ornithosis):** It can cause severe pneumonia, but it is very rare: According to the Robert Koch Institute (RKI), there have been between 10 and 26 infections in humans per year in Germany over the past ten years, mostly in aviculture.<sup>[4]</sup> The German Friedrich Löffler Institute, which deals with animal health, also informs on request that pigeons usually carry a different type of pathogen than parrots, which is less contagious to humans. The risk of infection for passers-by is therefore to be assessed as low.<sup>[3]</sup>
- **Salmonellosis:** It is a form of gastrointestinal flu. In the annual report of the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment on zoonoses<sup>[5]</sup>, i.e., diseases that are transmitted from animals to humans, it repeatedly emerges that pigeons are mainly infected by a pathogen (*Salmonella typhirium*) that almost never infests humans. An infection is only conceivable in the event of gross misconduct.
- **Avian influenza / bird flu:** According to the Friedrich Loeffler Institute, the importance of pigeons for the spreading of avian influenza is assessed as low and the risk of infection for humans is negligible.<sup>[2]</sup> It has also been proved that pigeons have a high resistance to the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus and a very low level of virus excretion, so that they play no role in transmission.<sup>[6]</sup>

[1] Institut für gesundheitlichen Verbraucherschutz und Veterinärmedizin, (Institute for Consumer Health Protection and Veterinary Medicine) Stellungnahmen 26.02.1998 und 20.07.2001 (Statements [in German] of 02/26/1998 and 07/20/2001)

[2] Hirt, A., Maisack, C., Moritz, J. (2015): "Tierschutzgesetz: TierSchG", (Animal Welfare Act) Commentary, 3rd edition [Book in German], publishing house Franz Vahlen, p. 56

[3] Unless otherwise stated: „Gesundheitsrisiko Tauben – Das Geschäft mit der Angst“, (Unless otherwise stated. "Health risk pigeons – The business with fear, [Article in German]), Spiegel-Online, August 30, 2017, <https://www.spiegel.de/gesundheit/diagnose/tauben-schaedlingsbekaeempfer-schueren-angstvor-voegel-n-a-1165237.html>

[4] See Robert Koch-Institute: "Infektionsepidemiologisches Jahrbuch der Jahre 2009 bis 2019" (Epidemiological Infection Yearbooks [in German] from 2009 to 2019)

[5] See German Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung (Federal Institute for Risk Assessment) "Erreger von Zoonosen in Deutschland", (Zoonoses in Germany, annual publications [in German])

[6] Lower Saxony's Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection "Empfehlungen zur tierschutzgerechten Bestandskontrolle der Stadttaubenpopulation", (Recommendations for control of the city pigeon population with regard to animal welfare, [Article in German]), Animal Welfare Advisory Board of the German State of Lower Saxony, 2019.

- Cryptococcosis: Fungal infection which, according to the RKI, can lead to life-threatening meningitis in people. The yeast can grow on solid bird droppings and primarily infect people with a weakened immune system.<sup>[7]</sup> Among other things, it therefore makes sense to wear respiratory protection when removing old pigeon droppings.
- Pigeon ticks: Until a few years ago they appeared in the former German Democratic Republic when renovating old buildings. The problem has apparently been resolved in the meantime. In the city of Leipzig, for example, which was once considered the stronghold of the pigeon tick, not a single case has been reported in the past ten years.
- Most pathogens in pigeons are host specific. They cannot be transmitted directly from animals to humans and most often not even to other bird species.

In general, various ectoparasites usually live at the wild breeding sites of pigeons. As a rule, they only try to attack people if the pigeons are scared off and the nest remains behind. They can be a nuisance for humans, but do not pose a serious health risk. Wild breeding sites should always be properly cleaned after the pigeons have left them.

A Hamburg veterinarian and the Lower Saxony State Commissioner for Animal Welfare provide detailed information about the mentioned as well as further diseases or parasites allegedly transmitted by pigeons in the document "Hazard classification of city pigeons".<sup>[8]</sup>

[7] See <https://www.rki.de> under "Infektionskrankheiten A - Z, Mykosen (Pilzinfektionen), Kryptokokkose" (Infectious diseases A - Z, mycoses (fungal infections), cryptococcosis, [Website in German])

[8] Dr. Mirja Kneidl-Fenske, Michaela Dämmrich: "Gefährdungseinstufung von Stadttauben. Übertragen Tauben Krankheiten und Parasiten? Überprüfung aktueller Aussagen aus dem Internet auf ihren Wahrheitsgehalt", (Endangerment classification of city pigeons. Do pigeons transmit diseases and parasites? A check of current statements from the internet for their truthfulness, [Article in German]) July 29, 2017, <https://www.erna-graff-stiftung.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Gef%C3%A4hrdungseinstufung-der-Stadttauben.pdf>

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**English translation:** Barbara Schwarz (volunteer)

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## Animals Have Rights – We demand them!

Despite the German Animal Welfare Act and the state Tierschutzgesetz und Staatsziel Tierschutz state goal of animal welfare, millions of animals suffer re in Tierversuchen, suffer every day in industrial agriculture, on notran transports, and in transports and in slaughterhouses. In addition, there are domestic and wild animals kept inappropriately in private households, in zoos, and in circuses, “fur” animals and countless other animals that fall victim to hunting every year. In order to end this millionfold suffering we are actively committed to phasing out animal experiments and animal husbandry. In order

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