PUBLIC & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

FERAL PIGEONS

Adelaide Plains Council

Generally considered not much more than a nuisance, feral pigeons can cause noise and odour issues, damage to buildings and roofs, and potentially pose a health risk.



Identify feral pigeons

Feral pigeons are usually grey, white or brown, with two black bars on their wings and iridescent feathers on their neck. Domestic pigeons might look similar, but they will normally have a tag around one of their legs.

Native pigeons have a pointed crest on their head.

Potential health risks

While uncommon, feral pigeons can transmit disease. This is usually seen in people who have regular close contact with large numbers of birds, or who are directly exposed to large amounts of pigeon faeces and inhale bacteria or fungal spores.

The best way to protect your health is by pigeon-proofing your home and buildings, and monitoring the quality of your drinking rainwater.

Protect your drinking rainwater

For most people, drinking rainwater from well-maintained roof catchments and tanks comes with a low risk of illness. Rainwater is not a common source of pathogens that cause gastrointestinal illness. Ways to improve the quality of your rainwater include:

- Regular tank and gutter cleaning and desludging
- Sealing around solar panels with mesh to prevent pigeons and other birds from nesting
- Installing filtration devices, first flush diverters and leaf filters
- Preventing mosquito breeding
- Preventing chemical contamination from on-site sources
- Pruning overhanging tree branches
- Protecting all inlets, overflows and other openings
- Avoiding pipework that holds stagnant water

Rainwater should be disinfected prior to drinking for people who are immuno-compromised, by boiling it or installing a UV light.

Testing your drinking rainwater

In general, the regular microbial testing of domestic rainwater tanks is not needed. Because of the complexity of testing, anyone concerned with the safety of their rainwater should first consider implementing quality improvement measures.

First flush diverters and water filters

First flush diverters direct the first water captured from a rain event away from your rainwater tank, ensuring the capture of only the cleaner rainwater.

Installing a water filter can also assist in cleaning your rainwater, removing impurities and making it safer to drink. They are available in various forms, including free-standing containers, tap-mounted devices, and whole-house systems.

Control methods

The most important first step is pigeon-proofing your buildings, otherwise pigeons will keep moving back in. It is important that Council and the community works together to eradicate pigeons, as successful measures on one property may increase issues for others, as pigeons relocate to other suitable locations.

Pigeon-proof your home

- Remove food sources
- Seal gaps in buildings
- Remove nests
- Install scare devices

Remove food sources

Don't feed pigeons, and remove any potential food source like pet food or compost to encourage pigeons to move elsewhere.

Seal gaps in buildings

Stop pigeons nesting in your home and other buildings by sealing any gaps, eaves, roofs, window ledges and around solar panels with mesh or other material.

Pigeons especially like solar panels because they provide good protection. If you are going to make any changes to your home, installing mesh around solar panels is a great first step.

A licensed pest control operator can install mesh, wires, spikes and gel to prevent pigeons from roosting and nesting.

Nest removal

Regular removal of nests will, in the long term, help to discourage persistent pigeons from nesting in a particular area.

Scare devices

Scare devices such as audio or visual deterrents can discourage pigeons from roosting or nesting.

Protect yourself when dealing with pigeons

Wear proper personal protective equipment when dealing with feral pigeons or cleaning up their faeces. This includes protective clothing, gloves, goggles and a respirator (face mask).

Lethal control methods

Licensed pest controllers can provide advice on lethal control methods such as shooting, trapping and sedation. However without combining these with other non-lethal options to pigeon-proof your home or building, other pigeons can quickly move in. With any lethal control method, animal welfare issues also need to be considered and addressed.

Contact a licensed pest contractor for more advice.

What can Council do?

Feral pigeon populations can only be reduced by Council and the community working together.

While total eradication may not be possible, a combined approach will greatly help prevent pigeons causing a local nuisance under the *Local Nuisance and Litter Control Act 2016*.

Contact us

Environmental Health Officers
8527 0200
info@apc.sa.gov.au
apc.sa.gov.au

Other resources

Guidance on the use of rainwater tanks, enHealth SA Health

Sources

Feral pigeons – management and control, SA Health
Guidance on the use of rainwater tanks, 2010, enHealth

D25/33996