

Parasites

Like all animals pigeons have their share of parasites, these are species specific as far as feeding on their host goes but they do not discriminate about who or what they walk over.

As sick and weakened animals attract parasites there is a chance that you will see, or have to treat your rescue for one or more of the parasites listed in the paragraphs below on arrival: PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU HAVE TO USE PRODUCTS DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR PIGEONS TO TREAT THEIR PARASITES!

Products to treat pigeon parasites are sold in bulk and can be expensive.

Pigeon feather lice (slender feather louse)

The most visible and common parasite to be found on a sick pigeon on the wings and on the breast, the are small, long, brown scurrying (not jumping) lice that feed on feather dust.

Johnson's Pigeon Insect Powder disposes of these. It is easiest if two people work together to de-lice the pigeon, one holding the bird and covering its eyes and beak to protect it while the other person parts the feathers and spreads the powder sparingly on the breast, under the wings and over the body. For a feral pigeon 4 gentle puffs of the powder from the plastic bottle should be sufficient.

Pigeon Fly (Flat Fly)

This is a blood sucking fly that not very often seen on feral pigeons but shows a preference for wood pigeons so is worth looking out for if you rescue one.

It looks similar to the house fly but has a hard body and moves sideways between the feathers, disappearing quickly.

To kill flat fly you will need to use Johnson's Veterinary Pigeon Spray.

Coccidia

This is a protozoal parasite that affects the pigeon's digestive tract, it weakens pigeons and opens the door to other infections. It can be treated with Coccimed or Harker's 3 in 1.

Tapeworm

Not all the pigeon wormers available are effective against tapeworm, fortunately it is not a very common parasite in a pigeon.

Tapeworm infestation can be identified by what is perceived as tiny little rice sized worms leaving the poops and "dying". These are actually tiny egg sacs full of tapeworm eggs and the parasite will still be in the body. Most of the popular wormers available for pigeons do not tackle tapeworm so I use Belgawormac Tablets if Tapeworm is suspected. Look online for these or other suitable wormers for Tapeworm.

Please note, however, that these tablets have been designed for racing pigeons weighing 400 + grams, so you will need to reduce the size of the tablet proportionately for a feral pigeon, collared dove, nestling or juvenile.

Roundworms

These thin worms that are about an inch long are very common in pigeons and can be treated with any pigeon worming tablet or Harkers 3 in 1.

Please note, however, that these tablets have been designed for racing pigeons weighing 400 + grams, so you will need to reduce the size of the tablet proportionately for a feral pigeon, collared dove, nestling or juvenile.

Roundworms tend to weaken pigeons and I have found they are often a factor when a pigeon without wing damage is unable to fly.

Hairworms

Hairworms cannot be easily detected except by the symptoms of infestation which are:

- Diarrhoea
- Pasted vent feathers
- Loose, dark green, sticky poops
- Weight loss
- Lethargy
- Fluffed up feathers
- Rapid weight loss

Harkers 3 in 1 will treat hairworms, but the size of the dose should be reduced according to the size of the bird, based on a single dose being designed to treat a 400 gram pigeon.