

Caught by predator or shot

Pigeons are often caught by predators, mainly cat dogs and hawks. They are also often shot by heartless humans. Their injuries can be extensive , particularly if a hawk has started to eat them alive, but they can make an amazing recovery with care.

Antibiotic treatment is important, even if there is no visible signs of a wound....cats and dogs carry pasteurella in their saliva which can cause them to die of fatal pasteurella septicemia within 24 hours unless they receive antibiotics promptly...often they die before they show any symptoms. Hawk claws and bullets can push dirt and debris deep into a wound and this can cause infection.

The best antibiotic is an amoxycillin/clavunate combination such as Synulox, Noroclav or Clavaseptrin as these have the broadest action. Baytril, often the choice of vets, is not the ideal antibiotic as it may not be very effective against some puncture wounds and some bacteria. The dose of this combination for a pigeon is 1/4 of a 50mg tablet per every 100 gms of pigeon given twice a day for at least 7 days...for severe wounds the antibiotic treatment can continue for up to 21 days.

Check the bird for injuries on its breast, back and under the wings. It might also have a broken wing or a broken leg that will need setting by a vet...sometimes the crop ruptures and needs to be sutured. If you take a pigeon to a vet for treatment don't be bullied into having it put to sleep because its injuries look so bad . Their chances of survival are often incredibly high.

Unless the body cavity (internal organs) are visible, you should flush the wound aggressively with sterile saline then smear on an anti bacterial barrier cream such as F10. Keep the wound moist with the barrier cream so that a scab doesn't form...it is important to remove any scabbing as it appears and gradually clean new flesh will build up inside the wound cavity.

The bird will need to be treated for shock: warmed on a heat pad or on a hot water bottle, or under a heat lamp, for at least half an hour and then given rehydrating solution made by mixing 1/2 pint warm water , with 1/2 tablespoon of glucose, or honey (or if you can't get either of those, sugar) and half a teaspoon of salt. Dip the pigeon's beak in this solution to encourage it to drink.

Leave the pigeon for a few hours before attempting to make it eat...only when it is warm and rehydrated should you offer it food and even then it might be necessary to hand feed it: defrosted peas and corn, served warm and popped in the beak one at a time are a good choice for hand feeding injured birds until they are ready to feed themselves. Start with very small feeds and then build up to around 100 pieces a day.

Case history:

This little white dove was found on River Green In Norwich.



The shot had gone through her wing shattering small bones, then into her breast and through the crop, exiting on the other side of the body.

The crop entry and exit wounds were small, she had to be fed carefully so that the food went below the level of the crop wound and didn't spill out of the crop or between the crop and the skin.

Not only did she survive and heal completely, she was also able to fly again!

Please note: This page is under construction, I need to add information on how to treat a bird whose internal organs are visible and add more case histories...more case histories!