

Splay leg and how to correct it

Sometimes when a baby pigeon is nesting its leg will slide out from under it and grow pointing out at the wrong angle. This can be corrected if caught early enough.

Case history : **Gonzo**

When I first saw Gonzo in 2004 she had already fledged and was feeding with a flock of pigeons in a grassy area in the city centre. One leg stuck out at



almost a right angle to her body, she also had a hooked beak that made it difficult to pick up seed, but this gallant little bird showed no self pity and joined in the flock's formation flight overhead, distinctive even from the ground because of her deformity.

Despite her brave and positive attitude, her life expectancy was even lower than normal...90% of fledglings die within their first year of life and as her beak would soon make picking seed up impossible, which would lead to starvation, I took her home.

I didn't think that it would be possible to fix a splayed leg that late in her development - she must have been at least 6 weeks old. Fortunately someone called Marian Isaacs, who was a member of a forum that I consulted advised me that correction was still possible.

Marian recommended moving the legs back to their natural position and



binding them there for a few weeks.

I found out that when I moved the splay leg inwards, Gonzo was able to stand straight and normal, so I linked the legs with a length of Boots self adhesive bandage to hold the splay leg in but pressing the bandage between her legs together to avoid to leg being pulled too far towards the other. To my surprise, with this bandage support Gonzo was able to walk properly, fly and even perch!

As splay legs can be associated with a calcium deficiency I gave her supplements of Zolcal D.

I kept the bandages on for three weeks, removing them occasionally for a few minutes to see if the legs would hold: it did. She was able to walk and perch normally, lay and sit on eggs and have a normal, though sheltered,



pigeon existence.

Gonzo grew up to be an odd little hen. She is much smaller than the others and her head is particularly small which makes her eyes look larger than usual. Her mate is one of the biggest cocks in the aviary, a handsome white pigeon so they make an odd couple. Her legs are a bit stiff now, so she walks with a bit of a waddle, but is significantly better than when I found her although her beak grows into a hook very quickly and needs regular trimming

