

TALKS

Controlling urban pigeon (*Columba livia*) population humanely

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Feral pigeons (*Columba livia*) are common in urban areas, where city buildings replace the rocky cliffs inhabited by their wild counterparts. Worldwide, pigeons have a significant economic impact. Pigeons' fouling, as well as being unsightly, can deface and accelerate the deterioration of buildings by eroding stonework, can block gutters and downpipes and cause potential slipping hazards on pavements, thus increasing the cost of maintenance. In addition, fouling has potential for diseases transmission.

Management tools such as netting, spikes, gels, and other approaches such as flying birds of prey can help, but these methods generally move the problem elsewhere. Products containing nicarbazin are an effective approach to reduce pigeon numbers through fertility control.

Already registered in Italy, Belgium, Hungary, Malta, and Spain as a veterinary medicine, as a means of reducing and controlling pigeon numbers, nicarbazin-treated bait has been shown to reduce pigeon numbers by 30% year on year for up to five years and maintain low pigeon numbers. This presentation will illustrate the results of applications of nicarbazin-treated bait for multiple, consecutive years, in many European cities, from 2002 to 2021. In cities like Florence, Genoa, Barcelona, Valencia, Brussels, just to mention the best known, the consistent use of nicarbazin-treated bait for at least 3 consecutive years led to a visible and documented reduction of the number of pigeons. In turn, the number of public complaints and accidents had a documented reduction.

The talk will also discuss potential issues encountered by practitioners in delivering nicarbazin-treated bait, illustrate evidence-based solutions to overcome these issues and compare advantages and disadvantages of different methods to resolve human-pigeon conflicts. Combined with other pigeon population management methods, fertility control represents a modern, integrated solution to mitigate this man-made wildlife problem.