

SS Lofts UK

Pigeons, Neighbours

And the Law



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Forward

Before I begin I must thank wholeheartedly to my family for being my rock!

'To my lovely wife and kids, who have supported me through some very unpleasant events as a result of keeping pigeons. Their constant motivation gave me the strength and insight to ward off the evil that lurked over the garden fence for nearly three years, which made our family life and keeping the birds a distressing phase.

Thank you for being by my side!

Disclaimer:

This is not legal advice, nor does this constitute advocating on matters mentioned and discussed! Please use this as a reference to gain insight and some background knowledge to common issues, nuisances and varied eventualities concerning pigeon sport which can arise due to intolerance, jealousy, envy and purely vindictive nature of the people occupying the neighbouring dwellings! The option of consulting your legal representative, citizens advice bureau, your local authority, Defra and other concerning governing bodies and law enforcement agencies is dependant on your circumstances and is purely your own initiative.

This heart aching subject is every pigeon fancier's worst nightmare!

If you are buying a property or leasing please check the deeds carefully to see if keeping live stock is permitted.

If you are a council tenant, please make sure you inform the council's housing department and seek permission before getting any birds or building the loft. If you don't you could jeopardise your tenancy going forward!

If you are renting privately ask the landlord for permission, '*we are thinking of keeping few pigeons as a family, will it be okay with you' or 'I have few prized birds etc'* you get the gist. Prior to contacting the landlord, call the building control office only if you intend to build a bigger loft than an average shed let's say 8x6, for this size they are simply not interested but do check. Then get in touch with your local Animal protection/welfare office. Most local councils will allow keeping pigeons as long as you keep the loft clean on regular basis and keep your feed in controlled manner to avoid unwelcoming visitors, it's a good practice to keep environmental health officer away in case of disgruntled neighbour complaining.

Will I need a permit? If your local authority requires you to have a permit or license please apply but do not tell the neighbours, get the permit in hand first! Usually its a simple application which will require no visit but do check with the concerning department as their prerequisite may vary along with the application process. My local authority does not require such permits for keeping pigeons nor specifies number threshold.

Make sure to get the name of the person(s) you spoke to and date/time. Write this down for your records and for any unforeseen eventuality down the line.

Telling the neighbours?

It is considered a good practice by many fanciers but alerting the unfamiliar neighbour prior to building the loft or getting the birds you may create a hurdle of some sort, you do not need your neighbours permission at all as long as all the right channels have been approached and a green signal is availed you are good to go! So don't make the common mistake many have made and found themselves in a spot of bother thereafter! I am not saying it doesn't work but the need is certainly not there, (some times we need to do away with the 'do gooder attitude') the only exception is if you intend to dark train your birds due to light issue (using external lights but do

this after you have set-up your loft and have the birds housed). A point to remember no one can tell you when to switch off or turn on your lights if the lights are within the out building/shed/loft! Some neighbours will see this as their right but certainly this is not the case. Even better call up the council and ask for assistance '*I keep pigeons and I am a member of the national/local flying club. We have annual competitions during our flying season for which*

the birds need rigorous training which also includes flying in the dark. What times are permissible to have a small light on in the evening over-looking the loft to help birds navigate (which are pointing away from any residential buildings) during weekdays and weekends'.

You will get a good grasp of what leverage you have as per your local authority rules and regulations, make a note of the persons name, time and date! Ask for a copy to be emailed to you! You are perfectly fine to keep the outside external lights on with pigeons about till 9pm but make sure you wrap up by 9pm and keep a log of the days you intend to do this, if you decide to take the birds over 9pm This is a good time to have a chat with your neighbour to explain the whole scenario make sure you do mention that this is not a regular occurrence (only seasonal). For this to be considered a nuisance or light pollution it has to be persistent, affecting the neighbours way of live, sleep etc.

I use blackout blinds to control any light over spill outside the loft, I have 3 large fluorescent tube lights in my breeding loft, 4 in my kit boxes and flight, this goes to show measures I've taken to eliminate any discomfort or possible issue should there be a visit from the local authority. This will show a huge consideration on your part! Keep any loft/shed and outbuildings 10ft away from the house and try not to go too close to the fence!

Good habits of your birds will pay dividends in the long run!

Get rid of any birds you have (if you are planning to let them out) which sit on roof tops or adjacent sheds (your neighbours) or just keep them for stock. Train your birds to fly from the flight or trap and land back the similar way. Do not let the birds roam around outside they will start to pick up bad traits by hopping from shed to shed etc. The purpose behind this drill and method is purely from property damage and nuisance point of view should at any stage you get in to an altercation with the next door! If the unfortunate happens, they will look for anything and everything. If your birds are trained as above the local authority will not accommodate any complaint against you and your birds. This may seem tedious but in fact it's straight forward, time consuming for sure but all falls under discipline and effective bird management!

For the unexpected or expected visit!

Keep a time table (laminated) of cleaning, feeding schedule displayed in every loft (For eg. Tues/Sat Tray cleaning, Vacuum minimum twice a week, in Moults every other day or daily, time permitting). Water changed daily, feed indicate your pattern on daily basis (Mon-Sun). Also include utensil/feeders bleached fortnightly. Keep bins in every loft lined with bin liners. Display annual vaccination chart in all lofts. In all lofts (well protected and covered) keep rat/mice bait at all times (check regularly to see if any activity has taken place), also outside the lofts do the same make sure to keep non target species safe from the bait! When the investigating officer(s) attend to your premises they will not want to know anything when they will see the above in action and in practice, however malicious the complaint has been made

against you and your birds for rats, mice, smell etc if you adhere to the above you'll be in their good books right away and first impressions certainly last forever. Please make sure you don't stock the droppings (I'll dispose it later, let's face it that 'later' gets later and later!) My final clean is on a Tuesday and droppings along with other rubbish goes out Wednesday mornings! All my lofts, cabinets display the above info and it is updated on new events occurring regularly.

Pigeon Noise:

Noise is another objection and complain that will be made but remember pigeons are like any other birds singing the dawn chorus! For it to be of any weight the noise has to be measured by specialist equipment usually in decibels and it has to affect their sleep, way of life etc majority of the times pigeons don't coo at night, unless the lights are on or they fight, the latter does happen in a crowded environment but nothing to be alarmed about, it's not louder than the howls of a town fox or the local neighbourhood cats choir!

Altercation:

keep a detailed log of every single altercation whether direct or indirect concern and objection raised by your neighbour(s). If it starts to get persistent inform the local authority team responsible for anti social behaviour, my local team is called 'Civic Pride' they will deal with the issue amicably if this becomes a regular interference and the option at this stage would be safer neighbourhood teams assistance and intervention going forward but remember if it is a threat or aggressive behaviour demonstrated toward you or your family members(s) immediately call the police on 999 (as you are not sure they could be carrying something?) for less violent or aggressive disturbances call 101 and report the incident(s) remember to keep the call reference No, date and name of the person you spoke to for records, this could later be used as evidence should things flare up. Few points to note: this usually upsets the everyday balance of your life, quality of life, living under stress and constant fear not being able to enjoy your property and affects the entire family's psychological well being and over time this will cause anxiety, stress, sleep deprivation etc. Unfortunately this will be the case in persistent harassment direct or indirect.

The unpleasant visit:

Should the neighbours knock on your door do video them as evidence, trust me it's a good practice if things get messy down the line. Record unusual incidents or gatherings time and date them (if they keep leaving their garden lights on, continuous music, noise etc) this log will also add weight to your counter argument and will serve in your favour. I'm not saying you should

become Sherlock Holmes but record and evidence unusual occurrence, which is beyond common courtesy!

Harassment by proxy:

If the neighbour knows your landlord or his representative he or she will use this method as their 'Ace card' to press buttons. They will even go to lengths of getting you evicted by causing grievances between you and your landlord. If you have informed the landlord of the birds you are in clear of any breach of contract (please get this in writing if you can). Inform your landlord of issues the neighbours are causing and harassing you over so the landlord is aware. Do let the landlord know either the police is involved or the local authority and this is not a matter for him or her to get involved in but you will keep them updated. Make sure you are in good standing with the landlord on timely rent payments and general upkeep of the property. For some this will be a nervy front but stay cool and calm. They can't evict you without serving correct notices and other reasonable grounds need to be taken in consideration, hence get their thumbs up before setting up your loft! Make sure (if you already haven't done so) tell them the council is on-board and have no objections in you keeping the birds. Do not argue with the landlord (that's what the neighbours want), remember a roof over your family is more important the birds are not. If you need to compromise do so by cutting the numbers down.

If the neighbours get a third party to pressurise or intimidate you, don't open the door call the police at once (on 999). Highlight the welfare and safety of yourself and your family. At any point if you feel a threat call law enforcement!

Avoid:

Provocation on of any sort (keep your cool) or the tables could be turned! Refrain from abuse, threats or intimidating behaviour as a response. Beware of minors and using foul language. If they throw stuff over the fence or cause any damage document it and immediately report it to the relevant authorities. Please do not retaliate however bad the onslaught is address it through the right channels. Don't take the law in to your own hands even if it feels like that's the only solution left...it's not! Be civil in your dealings!

Some extra measures:

CCTV and Intruder Alarm installation: A bit costly but will help record incidents and events at all times not just from the well-being of your loft but more importantly as your household security. It's worth the money and will also help toward insuring your loft and the birds, should you wish to.

Family and Pigeon Welfare:

At no point is anyone allowed to take the law in to their own hands or use cruelty towards any persons or animals irrespective of circumstances. In the case of you or your family members are subjected to this vile act call the police immediately on 999. If the birds are being subjected to such barbarity call the police ... as first and foremost its criminal damage and endangering live stock/birds etc they'll know the charge(s) then report this violation to RSPCA/RSPCB who will keep this on their records for a year if it's just a stress causing event (e.g. Birds being soaked by water hose or scared away etc) a point to remember they will consult a vet as part of their prosecution approach if the incident is worse, should it be repeated they will pursue this. In very severe act they will get involved and prosecute the culprits providing the evidence is there. This is where your CCTV system will be worth its weight in gold, if you can install cameras in your loft too not just on outbuildings.

I have tried to cover as much as possible but each and every scenario will differ. This article will help ease your frustration and will serve as a starting point to stand against unjust demands and importantly prepare yourself better to overcome these unpleasant life changing eventualities.

Remember the longer you stay quite, the more bold and aggressive they become. No one can tell you how to lead your life! Don't let your niceness be your weakness!

My aggressor was cautioned and received a restraining order by the police. The RSPCA have him on file for a year. Our family life has returned to normality but leaving us very cautious in future of mingling with the neighbours.

A simple hello and hi when we move, if that!

The Verdict: "No neighbour cant tell you not to keep pigeons and that is the law!"

Yours in pigeon sport

Seb

SS Lofts UK

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