



PIGEONS AND DOVES

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The domestic pigeon (family *Columbidae*) includes over 300 breeds descending from the Rock Dove (*Columbia livia*). They originated in Eurasia but are now found all over the world. They have had a relationship with man since approximately 3000 B.C. There are four categories of pigeons. Utility pigeons are raised for meat. Flying pigeons are raised for their brilliant flying skills (rollers, sky cutters, tumblers, and tipplers). Racing Homers known for their fancy shapes and colors such as the fantails, pouters, croppers, archangels, etc. Pigeons are faithful and mate for life. This sort of commitment may be responsible for its bond to their owner and home as illustrated by their homing instinct. They will often defend their mate and territory aggressively. Pigeons come in many color combinations and their plumage can include anything from feathered feet (muffed feet) to crested, maned, or hooded heads. These birds have a pleasant personality and quiet nature. They have a peaceful cooing voice. They are generally hardy birds, easy to tame, and simple to care for.

Purchasing a Pigeon

Pigeons may be purchased from a pet store or a reputable breeder. When selecting a pigeon, try to choose a young bird as it may be easier to tame and train. Older, wild, colony, or parent raised birds may prove difficult to tame. Hand-raised babies often make better pets since they have been completely socialized with humans. Young birds are easier to tame and adapt readily to new environments and situations. Your new bird should be exposed early to different events (children and adults, men and women, other pets, car trips, visits to the veterinarian, etc.) to help promote a calm, well-adjusted pet. The lively, alert bird that is not easily frightened is more likely a healthy bird. After purchasing your new bird, we recommend that a veterinarian perform a physical exam to make sure that it is healthy.

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Veterinary Care

Pigeons require regular, routine physical exams. During these exams, we can perform the needed grooming and laboratory tests to test for underlying problems as needed. During these annual exams, health, nutritional, and maintenance issues can be identified and addressed. Veterinary exams help prevent disease by catching problems early and will aid in the maintenance of a long lasting, healthy relationship between you and your bird.

Color

A mature pigeon has a basic color of dull grey with white rump and two large wing bars. Other colors include white, brown, grey, bronzy- green and black. Immature pigeons are a duller version of their adult color.

Sexing	Adult males are generally larger than adult females and will puff out their chest in display more, strut more and are more vocal. Immature pigeons are difficult to differentiate.
Weight	300-600 grams
Size	10-15 inches in length
Lifespan	10-14 years
Diet	A pigeon appropriate pelleted diet
Breeding	Sexual maturity is about 6-12 months. Pigeons are relatively easy to breed but require privacy and both sexes incubate the eggs.
Brood size	2 eggs hatch in 14-19 days and the young leave the nest in 5 weeks.
Cage	Minimum size is 2' X 3' X 4' depending on the size of the bird. Generally, pigeons do better in flight cages or lofts for complete freedom.

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