

Common Dove Ailments

The best advice is to consult your vet if you think your dove may be ill.

A sick dove may show various symptoms including wheezing and coughing, eye or nasal discharge, and damaged or missing feathers among others.

Diarrhoea: Can be caused by a change in diet or may be due to internal parasites. Seek veterinary attention.

Pneumonia: Difficulty breathing is the main symptom and is caused by an infection. Consult a vet.

Trichomoniasis: Masses in the mouth and throat area. Symptoms can include loss of appetite, loose droppings and shortness of breath. Seek veterinary attention.

Calcium deficiency: This is common amongst caged doves so grit and high-calcium crushed oyster shell are essential. Symptoms include eggs with soft shells.

Worms: Birds become emaciated and listless and will eventually die. Seek veterinary attention.

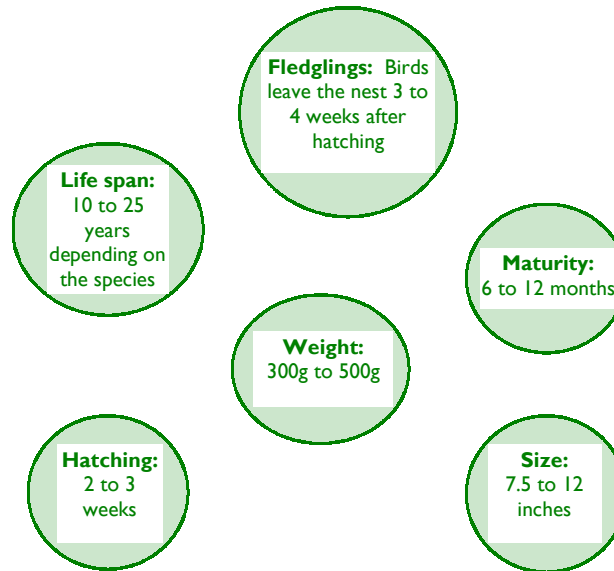
Overgrown nails: The nails of the bird may become overgrown and need trimming. Take the dove to a vet to have this done.



Dove Facts

Like the parrot family, doves and pigeons have what is called a 'true crop' which means they are able to produce a substance known as 'crop milk' which they regurgitate to feed their young.

All doves coo and both sexes will do so aggressively when another bird of the same sex is around.



The Environmental Animal Sanctuary & Education (EASE) is a registered charity (no. 1089160) which promotes aspects of the human/companion animal relationship. Our services include pet fostering, pet bereavement counselling and providing education in animal welfare. For more information about our work, contact:

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**Environmental
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The EASE Guide to Caring for DOVES



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Doves are beautiful birds which will need a large area in which to live. They will need regular care and attention, and may need veterinary treatment from time to time. All of these practical considerations must be taken into account before deciding to keep doves.

A Home for your Doves

The choice of home for doves will depend upon the type of bird - some are hardy and will happily live outside all year given adequate shelter, while others will require heating in winter if kept in an outdoor aviary. Check on the requirements before obtaining the birds.

The best home for hardy doves is a dovecote which provides a safe home for them while allowing them to fly free and be seen in all their splendour. Another option is an aviary or a cage allowing AT LEAST 2 cubic feet per bird, giving the doves adequate space to fly - but, as with all animals, the bigger the better. If the birds do not have flying space they should be exercised daily by letting them out to fly in a secure area i.e. a room with closed windows and doors.

Doves may be kept indoors as they will acclimatise to a warm temperature over a period of time, but do not subject them to extreme or dramatic changes. They should be kept in a position where there is a good amount of natural light and also where they have access to an area of shade. Also provide the doves with a large, shallow bowl of water in which to bathe.

If kept in an aviary or cage, provide a number of perches and/or branches of different sizes at various heights which will separate the birds out and help prevent fighting and squabbling.

The cage or aviary must be regularly cleaned and disinfected to prevent the spread of disease. The perches and branches should be cleaned and the floor raked over and the droppings removed, and then washed down if the floor is wood or concrete. All food and water containers must also be washed and disinfected every week.



Food and Drink for your Doves

Apart from fruit doves, the staple diet consists mainly of seeds which the birds swallow whole. Different breeds will prefer different varieties and combinations of seeds and you should check on this before purchasing the birds. Most doves will thrive on the wild bird food available from garden centres or pet shops although breeders often prefer to make up their own combinations. Protein is an important part of the diet and maggots or mealworms are a good source of this, as are mashed boiled eggs. The food should be fresh and any that remains uneaten must be removed before it goes off.

Grit or sand and crushed shell (such as oyster) should be given and are available in pet shops. The grit or sand aids digestion by helping to grind the seeds in the birds' gullets, and it should be offered separately to the food in a small container along with the crushed shell which provides calcium used in the production of the egg shells.



Handling your Doves

Doves should only be caught and handled when absolutely necessary as handling them can cause them stress.

They can be caught using a hand-held net or by hand. When catching them by hand, grasp from above, bringing both hands around the bird and keeping the wings close against the body.

Hold the dove with the feet side by side between the first and second fingers (palm upwards) and the thumb of the same hand over the top of the tail and the tips of the wings, holding them in a closed position. The other hand then supports the breast and is also free to examine the bird if needed. The dove may also be held with both hands encircling the bird.

Doves

Doves are members of the same family as pigeons and they originate from Asia and South America, descending from the rock dove. They are gentle birds and are considered sacred in many world faith systems. They are also a universal symbol of peace, and have been used as such by the United Nations since the 1950s.



Dove Behaviour

Doves are very social and will challenge and fight vigorously to establish a pecking order. The more dominant birds will perch higher than lower ranking birds.

Fighting: Doves will fight to establish dominance which can be a problem in smaller aviaries and may lead to a bird needing to be removed to a separate cage.

Huddled: When cold or ill the bird may fluff up its feathers, draw its head in close to the body and perhaps close its eyes. It may remain so for hours in extreme cases.

Sunbathing: In direct sunshine a dove may spread its tail, incline the body to one side and lift the wings, alternately holding one aloft for a few seconds or minutes.

Waterbathing: Doves step into shallow water and fluff the feathers, crouch and flutter the wings so that water is sprayed throughout the plumage.

Preening: A dove will arrange its feathers with its bill, each feather being passed between the mandibles in turn, followed by ruffling and shaking.