

ASSOCIATION FOR
★ ANIMAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ★
1536 16th St. N.W. Washington, DC 20036

August 6, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

I am the former Chief of Zoonotic Disease for the Department of Health and Human Services of the Washington D.C. government and, before that, an animal facilities inspector for the Maryland Department of Environmental Protection. It was my job to testify in matters involving the transmission of disease from animals to humans. I can attest that, in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control, a part of the federal government, I was called upon to affirm that the disease risk from casual contact with pigeons is miniscule and the chance of infection, rare. In fact, there is a far less risk of contracting a disease from pigeons, except under certain circumstances, than in sending a child to school or interacting with other humans.

Pigeons can carry pneumonia-like viruses, notably ornithosis or psittacosis (parrot disease), a bacterial infection that can cause respiratory symptoms in (mostly) immune-compromised humans but it is rarely contracted. That is because in order to be infected, first the birds themselves have to have the disease, and most do not. Second, the droppings from infected birds must accumulate and dry out, which takes time. Third, someone must come into close contact so as to inhale the dust from the dried droppings at close quarters. This is why human cases of the disease are found on occasion in poultry sheds where large numbers of chickens are kept tightly packed, air circulation is poor, and waste is allowed to collect over a period of many weeks or months, sometimes years. It is can also be found under unsanitary conditions in pigeon lofts.

It is my professional opinion that free flying pigeons and pigeon feeding areas pose a risk so negligible that banning outdoor gatherings of two or more human beings would be a higher disease prevention priority.

Sincerely,



Ingrid Newkirk
Vice President

District of Columbia

Signed and sworn to (or affirmed) before me on:
8/6/2025 by Ingrid Newkirk
Date Name(s) of Individual(s) making statement

Christine Lambert
Signature of Notarial Officer

Notary
Title of Office

My Commission Expires: 09/30/2027

