



Pigeon Paramyxovirus has been confirmed in Guernsey. This follows investigations by the States Veterinary Officers into the high numbers of diseased pigeons from St. Peter Port that have been hospitalised at the GSPCA.

### What is Pigeon Paramyxovirus (PPMV)?

Pigeon Paramyxovirus is a Notifiable Disease, anyone who discovers a sick pigeon should contact the GSPCA for advice (01481 257261).

Pigeon Paramyxovirus is a viral disease that primarily affects pigeons but can affect poultry. There are 12 recognized serotypes of avian paramyxoviruses. Serotype 1 contains both Pigeon Paramyxovirus type 1 (PPMV1) and Newcastle Disease virus (NDV), which affects poultry. The virulence (ability to cause disease) of both PPMV and NDV is highly variable.

The mortality rate of pigeons infected with PPMV can vary between 10% and 100%. In the current outbreak of PPMV in Guernsey, the mortality among pigeons taken to the GSPCA is currently 100%.

The incubation period can vary from a few days to several weeks. There is no specific treatment for this disease and infected birds often die within 72 hours but may survive with supportive therapies.

### What are the signs of PPMV?

Signs of pigeon paramyxovirus include:

- nervous signs, including trembling wings and heads, and twisting of the neck,
- partial paralysis of wings and legs (birds cannot fly, walk and be unable to feed),
- unusually wet and liquid faeces (diarrhoea) that are often greenish in colour,
- quietness, loss of appetite and reluctance to move.

Infection in poultry may cause:

- no symptoms,
- mild respiratory signs (sneezing),
- reduced egg production,
- nervous signs,
- increased mortality.



## How does it spread?

PPMV is very contagious and can spread between pigeons through direct contact with their faeces and respiratory secretions.

The disease can be introduced to a loft of kept pigeons through contact with infected wild pigeons and through:

- pigeon transporters that have not been adequately cleaned and disinfected,
- drinking water in lofts and transporters,
- pigeon fanciers carrying infection on their clothes, hands and feet.

PPMV can cause disease in poultry if their feed is infected with the faeces of infected pigeons, for example. Paramyxovirus can cause Newcastle Disease in chickens.

At this stage, the virus appears to be highly pigeon specific and no other species have been affected.

## Does it affect humans and other animals?

Some strains of paramyxovirus can potentially cause temporary conjunctivitis and flu-like symptoms in people. However, this is only a risk for lab workers and poultry vaccination teams that expose themselves to very large quantities of the virus.

Eurasian collared-doves (*Streptopelia decaocto*) are also susceptible to PPMV but the susceptibility of other species of wild birds varies depending on the strain of the virus.

Paramyxovirus is not a risk to dogs, cats or any other non-avian pets.

## What do I do if I come across a sick pigeon?

Please contact the GSPCA for advice (01481 257261).

There is no treatment for PPMV other than supportive treatments and badly affected birds should be humanely euthanized.

## What do I do if I come across a dead pigeon?

Put the pigeon in a bag and place it in your general black bag waste bin. Always wash your hands after handling wildlife. There is no need to call the GSPCA or States Vets.



## What should I do if I keep pigeons?

Most pigeon keepers (racing, show & fancy) routinely vaccinate their flocks against PPMV and if they have not done so, they should do so promptly.

Pigeon owners' primary defence against PPMV1 is to prevent the introduction of the disease into their loft by the implementation of the following biosecurity procedures:

- preventing wild birds and feral pigeons (and their droppings) from having contact with your pigeons or contaminating their feed or water,
- keeping lofts and equipment clean,
- cleaning and disinfecting footwear and washing hands and clothes after visiting other birds,
- disinfecting equipment used to house, transport, feed and water other birds,
- limiting any unnecessary visitors to your pigeons' loft.

Check your birds regularly for any signs of disease. If clinical signs arise, isolate those birds which are showing clinical signs from the rest of the pigeons in the loft and contact the GSPCA in the first instance for advice.

## What should I do if I keep poultry?

Good biosecurity measures, already in place to combat the current avian influenza threat, will reduce the risk of pigeons directly or indirectly infecting poultry. Examples of these are as follows:

- Keep them housed – if you do not have a purpose built building you could use a garden shed, garage or polytunnel (provided there is adequate light and ventilation).
- Block up any gaps in poultry housing with boards or netting to avoid any wild birds getting in.
- If it is not possible to house birds, you must separate them from wild birds in a netted enclosure and ensure that food and water is kept indoors.
- Make your premises unattractive to wild birds using scarers, foils or streamers.
- Store food and bedding inside to reduce the risk of contamination.
- Clean and disinfect – footwear, hard surfaces, equipment and vehicles.



Please register your poultry with the States of Guernsey if you have not already done so. Email [farmservices@gov.gg](mailto:farmservices@gov.gg) or call the farm services answerphone on (01481) 235740 and provide the following information:

- Name, Address, Contact details (phone number, email address), Type of birds kept, Number of birds kept, Address where poultry are located, if different to the home address.
- The Office for the Environment and Infrastructure will use this information to contact you if there is a disease outbreak or if there are any other animal health/welfare concerns that you should be made aware of.
- For details on how they will use your data please see our [Fair Processing Notice](#).

Chickens in commercial poultry flocks are usually vaccinated against NDV.