

Salmonella Causing 'Zombie Pigeon' Phenomenon

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A group of pigeons huddling in individual cubby-holes and basking in the summer sunshine at a Moscow building. **Vladimir Filonov / MT**

Moscow's Veterinary Committee reported that the mass death of pigeons in the capital is caused by salmonella, not the more dangerous Newcastle virus.

Veterinary specialists detected lesions on the gastrointestinal tracts and livers of dead birds, caused by salmonella, an intestinal infection spread among animals and humans.

Earlier, the Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Inspection Service announced that the bird's abnormal behavior was connected to the Newcastle virus disease, which can more easily spread to humans.

The birds' salmonella will not be harmful to city residents if direct contact with the sick birds is avoided and standards of personal hygiene are maintained.

In recent days, Muscovites have become increasingly alarmed over the startling amount of dead or dying pigeons on the city's streets and have noted birds behaving oddly, either turning around in circles or sitting completely still and not paying attention to passersby.

Internet users have already dubbed the strange phenomenon "zombie pigeons."

Federal Consumer Protection Service head Gennady Onishchenko doubted the presence of a serious epidemic, adding: "In the hands of Picasso a pigeon became an embodiment of piece. But in fact, in a sanitary sense, the most untidy and one of the most stupid birds," Radio Liberty reported.

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