

## COLD-WEATHER BLOOD FEATHERS IN DOVES?

by

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Iowa in the winter is located just south of the North Pole, so we have to keep the doves in-doors then. In fact, any state where the temperature is likely to present a wind-chill of 20°F or lower can be a serious problem for doves. I expect most of the squabs to succumb at such temperatures. Recently we have had - 18°F (and - 44°F wind chill). The adults can endure such spells if they stay dry, cannot put their feet into water, are protected from wind and are well nourished.

But a strange trouble has often appeared -- new feathers that do not open normally but stay blood-filled (see photo\*). These feathers may freeze and then burst. I have not seen such in domestic pigeons, which seem much more cold-tolerant.

So far as I know, nobody else has previously reported such blood-feathers in doves and their relation to frigid weather. If anybody raising doves observes such abnormal feathers and has a different explanation, I would be interested in hearing from them. Also, does it occur in other species of doves? Anyway, I am sure it is not some new disease, since I see it every winter here, and the problem disappears with the warmer weather, although the blood stains may be seen for quite a while. When a big regrowing tail feather bursts, it looks awful -- life threatening, although it is not.

Possibly the thyroid gland of the dove is "over-active" from cold-stress, and this may induce some molt. It is known that thyroid hormone is necessary for normal molting.

\*Courtesy of W. F. Hollander

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