

# Retailer Debunks ‘Carrier Pigeon’ Cannabis Delivery Stunt

## Carrier Pigeon Cannabis Delivery Hoax Takes Flight in New York Before Retailer Confirms It Was All a Marketing Stunt

*Viral Campaign by The Travel Agency Tricks Major Media Outlets Into Reporting a Fictional Bird-Based Cannabis Delivery Service*

A New York marijuana retailer’s tongue-in-cheek marketing stunt ruffled more than a few feathers this week after several major media outlets mistakenly reported that “carrier pigeons” would soon be delivering cannabis across New York City.

The business behind the viral hoax, The Travel Agency, launched the campaign under the name “Project Pigeon,” claiming that a fleet of trained birds would begin ferrying small cannabis packages between Manhattan and Brooklyn starting next year. The company’s social media teasers and a professional-looking press release convinced several reporters that the concept was genuine, leading to widespread—and now red-faced—coverage across local and national media.

### The “Project Pigeon” Campaign Claimed to Use Trained Birds With Miniature Backpacks to Deliver Up to One Gram of Marijuana

In its press release, The Travel Agency stated that it had successfully completed a “test flight” with pigeons equipped with tiny backpacks capable of carrying one gram of marijuana. The document added that 20 birds would make up the pilot program, soaring above traffic to deliver cannabis to adults aged 21 and over throughout Manhattan and Brooklyn.

“As The Travel Agency, it’s only natural we’d explore all modalities of travel for our delivery service—even pigeons,” said Arana Hankin-Biggers, the company’s co-founder, in the release. “And being in NYC, we thought there’s no better courier than the ever-present and beloved pigeon.”

The press materials even included mock photographs of pigeons with miniature cannabis-branded satchels, claiming the initiative would “reimagine delivery with a very New York sense of ingenuity.”

### Multiple News Outlets Pick Up the Story Before The Travel Agency Confirms It Was Purely Satirical

The stunt was so convincing that outlets such as Fox 5 New York and Time Out published articles announcing the forthcoming “avian delivery service.” But after The New York Post questioned the authenticity of the story, a spokesperson for The Travel Agency confirmed that the entire campaign was nothing more than a playful marketing exercise.

The company's public relations team clarified to Marijuana Moment on Wednesday that no pigeons were ever trained or tasked with delivery duties. "Project Pigeon" was designed purely as a publicity stunt—a way to bring humor and attention to New York's evolving cannabis market.

## **Animal Rights Advocates Push Back, Saying Even a Fake Campaign Sends the Wrong Message**

Not everyone was amused by the gimmick. Megan Walton, founder of the Pigeons for Miles avian sanctuary, expressed frustration that the campaign trivialized the exploitation of animals, even hypothetically. "It's still very upsetting to even conceptualize a campaign like this, centering on exploiting pigeons," she said.

The Travel Agency's press release attempted to preempt such criticism by claiming the concept wasn't about "putting birds to work," but about celebrating "New York's most iconic residents." Still, the backlash served as a reminder of how sensitive consumers and advocates can be to perceived animal welfare issues—even in jest.

## **State Cannabis Delivery Laws Make the "Pigeon Program" Logistically Impossible**

Aside from the absurdity of the concept, the idea of pigeons delivering marijuana runs directly afoul of New York's cannabis delivery laws. Licensed retailers must adhere to strict security, anti-diversion, and verification procedures, including verifying identification and ensuring adult hand-to-hand transfers at the point of delivery—requirements that no pigeon, no matter how well trained, could possibly fulfill.

The state's Cannabis Control Board (CCB) and Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) have spent months refining delivery rules to ensure safe, traceable transactions. The "Project Pigeon" stunt, while humorous, inadvertently highlighted how complex and tightly regulated cannabis delivery truly is in New York's market.

## **New York's Cannabis Market Continues To Grow Despite Regulatory Challenges and Public Confusion**

The prank comes at a time when New York's legal marijuana industry is hitting major milestones. Officials recently announced that over \$2 billion in cannabis products have been sold since adult-use sales began—\$1 billion of that in 2025 alone.

However, the state's rollout has been anything but smooth. The CCB recently extended the renewal deadline for conditional adult-use licenses until December 31, 2026, in response to widespread confusion about zoning restrictions that affect more than 100 dispensaries located near schools or houses of worship.

Governor Kathy Hochul has pledged to push for legislative amendments to fix the zoning issue and streamline licensing for legitimate operators.

## **Cannabis Policy Updates Include Licensing, Tax Filing Extensions, and Business Support Grants**

Both chambers of the New York Legislature have approved a bill extending the deadline for cannabis businesses to file quarterly tax returns—from 20 days after quarter's end to 50. The measure now awaits Hochul's signature, following her veto of a similar reform last year.

Meanwhile, regulators have begun distributing the first \$5 million in grant funding to 52 retail businesses under the Conditional Adult-Use Retail Dispensary (CAURD) Grant Program, aimed at supporting justice-

involved entrepreneurs. Each recipient received up to \$30,000 to help cover startup and operational costs.

The OCM also launched an interactive map to help New Yorkers locate licensed dispensaries, reinforcing the state's push to drive consumers away from the still-prevalent illicit market.

## **New York's Broader Push Toward a Mature, Regulated Cannabis Industry Continues Amid Creative—and Sometimes Confusing—Marketing Campaigns**

The “Project Pigeon” stunt is only the latest in a string of humorous or misleading cannabis marketing ploys. Earlier this year, THC-infused beverage maker Drippy duped several outlets into reporting that its drinks would be available on Virgin Atlantic flights. That story, too, turned out to be false—complete with an AI-generated video and fake CEO letter.

While these tongue-in-cheek promotions generate buzz, they also reveal how normalization of cannabis culture in New York has made such stories believable. Once unthinkable, the idea of legal marijuana—delivered by birds or otherwise—is now part of everyday conversation in the state.

As the regulated market matures, industry experts say campaigns like “Project Pigeon” highlight the balance between creativity, compliance, and credibility in a highly scrutinized industry still finding its cultural footing.

## **Regulators Focus on Enforcement, Education, and Expanding Opportunities for Legal Cannabis Businesses**

New York regulators continue to emphasize enforcement against illegal marijuana storefronts through initiatives like Operation Padlock, which has shuttered hundreds of unlicensed locations. Licensed dispensaries have since reported sales growth of more than 100 percent in affected areas.

At the same time, officials are expanding worker training programs, exploring new licensing categories such as cannabis-friendly movie theaters, and developing clearer guidance for marketing and packaging standards.

Even as creative campaigns like “Project Pigeon” grab headlines, regulators remain focused on one goal: ensuring New York's cannabis industry grows sustainably, safely, and with integrity one delivery (by human courier, not pigeon) at a time.

Email: [info@cannabisriskmanager.com](mailto:info@cannabisriskmanager.com) | Phone: +415-226-4060

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