



# How you can Reduce the Spread of Diseases Among Backyard Birds



## Transmission of pathogens through bird feeders and baths.

Be aware that many common avian pathogens exist that can be spread through communal feeding areas and baths. Examples: *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, *E. coli*, *Trichomonas gallinae*, *Mycoplasma gallisepticum*, etc.

## Plant wildlife-friendly vegetation.

Providing species of fruit-bearing plants, sunflowers, millet, etc. as well as plants that provide safe places for them to hide [e.g. dense trees, shrubs, bushes] can be used to attract wild birds to your yard with or without the use of bird feeders. These also allow birds to feed [and/or hide] while reducing crowding and potential transmission of disease among wild birds.



## Keep bird food dry and do not use table feeders or feed on the ground.

Certain pathogens of birds can survive for longer periods of time on bird food if it becomes moist [i.e. *Trichomonas*]. For this reason it is best to only use feeders that cover food and keep it from becoming wet. Additional reasons for not using table feeders or feeding birds on the ground is that it allows birds to land on the food, increasing the risk that the food will become contaminated [e.g. food may become exposed to fecal matter, etc.], and allows potential carrier species [e.g. pigeons] to mingle with more vulnerable species [i.e. song birds].

## Monitor backyard birds visiting your bird feeders and bird baths.

Observe birds for any signs of illness and watch for any dead or dying birds in your yard. If you observe any sick birds take down your bird feeders/baths immediately and keep them put away for the duration of the potential transmission period. In the case of a summer or fall outbreak that would be after the first prolonged cold weather and frost of the winter. In the case of a winter or spring outbreak that would be until the first warm weather and emergence of insects in the summer. Disinfect bird feeders/baths before returning them to use.



## Thoroughly clean and disinfect bird feeders and bird baths regularly.

Both bird feeders and bird baths should be emptied and disinfected using a 10% solution of domestic bleach [1 part bleach in 9 parts water] on a weekly basis. Feeders should be thoroughly rinsed and dried before re-use. Brushes and equipment used to clean bird feeders and baths should not be used for any other purpose. Keep them outside and away from food preparation areas. Ensure feeders are re-filled with fresh food [do not re-use old food] and ensure bird baths contain clean water. Rake up any food spilled on the ground.

## Wear gloves and wash hands and arms after handling feeders/baths.

Wear rubber gloves when cleaning feeders and thoroughly wash hands and forearms afterwards with soap and water, especially before eating and drinking. Avoid handling sick or dead birds directly.



## CONTACT US

The CWHC relies on reports from the public and our partners to assist our surveillance efforts. This surveillance allows us to inform the public and government agencies of any significant outbreaks in order to help reduce the risk of further transmission of these diseases. Report any sick or dead birds to the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative.

Find your closest regional centre at: <http://www.cwhc-rccsf.ca/contact.php>