

KEEPING SONGBIRDS SAFE

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BACKYARD BIRD HEALTH

THE ISSUES

- Songbird watching and feeding is a beloved activity cherished by Wyomingites year round. Spring is a particularly popular time for backyard birders to fill their feeders and enjoy these colorful creatures.
- Providing a little bird seed to our feathered friends seems like harmless activity, but bird baths and bird feeders can lead to some unintended consequences.
- It's important to be aware of these issues and to know the proper steps to take to minimize the chance of disease spread.
- Birds congregating at feeders have more contact with each other and therefore, are more likely to spread diseases to each other through saliva, feces, and other close interactions.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Clean bird feeders and bird baths once a week.
- Remove all seed and wash any feces or dirt off surfaces with warm, soapy water. Then, apply a bleach solution (9 parts water, 1 part bleach) to all surfaces and let sit for 15 minutes before rinsing with clean water. Once dry, refill with fresh seed and water.
- If you notice sick or dying birds around your feeders and baths, remove the items, clean them as described above, and do not replace them for four weeks to discourage birds from congregating in a potentially contaminated area.
- Consider using hanging feeders instead of platform feeders. Platform feeders collect more feces and water, which can cause seed to become moldy.



BACKYARD BIRD HEALTH



HEALTH RISKS

- Bacteria, fungi, parasites, and viruses can be spread between birds at bird feeders and bird baths. A few examples of such diseases are Salmonellosis, Aspergillosis, Trichomoniasis and Avian Paramyxovirus.
- Birds infected with these diseases may show some of the following signs: weight loss, lethargy, eye discharge, ruffled feathers, diarrhea, neurologic signs, respiratory distress or acute death.



QUESTIONS

Can I get sick from handling dead or diseased birds and their feeders?

- Yes! Some diseases carried by birds can be spread to humans and other animals (such as your cat and dog). Always wear gloves when handling birds and their feeders and baths, and be sure to wash your hands and arms afterwards! Also, remove dead birds from your property to discourage pets from consuming their carcasses.

Find a sick or dead bird near your feeder?

- Take note of the date and type of bird (if known).

Find 3 or more dead birds?

- Call your regional WGFD office

If you collect any dead birds for testing:

Wear disposable gloves to pick up any dead animal and double bag the body. Keep dead animals cold or frozen until transported to a WGFD office

Additional Resources:

<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/wyoming-wildlife/wildlife-disease-and-health>

<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/wyoming-wildlife/nongame-wildlife/nongame-birds>

https://wgfd.wyo.gov/WGFD/media/content/PDF/Wildlife/Nongame/Birds/WGFD_WYWILDSCAPE.pdf

