

**Bird Feeder Biosecurity**  
*SCWDS Briefs*, October 1994, 10.3

The recent outbreak of conjunctivitis in house finches has created renewed interest in the potential for disease transmission at bird feeders. Although the relationship between bird feeders and house finch conjunctivitis is speculative, this outbreak provides a good opportunity to remind the public of their responsibilities in regard to feeder sanitation. Transmission of a variety of infectious agents can be enhanced by dirty bird feeders. Outbreaks of salmonellosis in songbirds have been documented at bird feeders, and trichomoniasis, a protozoan disease of doves and pigeons, also is commonplace. Pulmonary infections caused by inhalation of *Aspergillus* spores in moldy feed or infection by avian pox virus are other possible problems.

To reduce the risk of disease transmission and the overall stress of birds using feeders, the following basic guidelines are suggested:

1. Provide ample feeder space to reduce crowding.
2. Keep feeders and surroundings clean of waste feed and droppings.
3. Use safe feeders without sharp edges or points that may injure birds or scarify their skin.
4. Use metal, plastic, or glass feeders with non-porous surfaces that are easy to clean. Clean and disinfect feeders weekly using a 10% solution of household bleach.
5. Provide fresh feed that is free of mold and rodent droppings.

Do not wait until a problem develops before implementing these precautions.

For additional information, a pamphlet entitled "Coping with Diseases at Bird Feeders" is available. This informational item was prepared jointly by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Colorado State University and may be obtained by contacting the National Wildlife Health Center at 608-271-4640.