Diseases at Feeders

- Many diseases are spread at bird feeders including salmonellosis, trichomoniasis, finch conjunctivitis, avian pox, and others. These diseases can be controlled and prevented by proper use and regular cleaning of feeders.

Salmonellosis

- Sick birds may look weak or fluffed up, and often die. Disease outbreaks are most common in crossbills, pine siskins, finches, and grosbeaks. The *Salmonella* bacteria are spread at feeders contaminated by feces, or by eating feed off the ground. *Salmonella* bacteria can also cause illness in humans and domestic animals.

Trichomoniasis

- Sick birds cannot swallow feed because of an infection in the throat. Sick birds may starve to death. Mourning doves are most commonly affected. The trichomonad parasite is spread when infected birds drop feed that cannot be swallowed and other birds eat the contaminated feed.

Finch Conjunctivitis

- Sick birds have swollen, red, watery, and/or crusty eyes. Birds may recover from this disease, although severe cases can be fatal. Finches are most commonly affected. The *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* bacteria is spread by contact between birds and is usually spread in crowded groups.

Avian pox

- Sick birds have wart-like growths on the face, feet, and other unfeathered skin. Growths may interfere with the bird's ability to see, breathe, eat, or drink. The avian poxvirus is spread by contact in crowded groups, contact with contaminated surfaces such as bird feeders, by ingesting contaminated food or water, or by insects.

Bird Feeder Recommendations

Use multiple feeders to avoid crowding. Do not feed on the ground, and avoid platform feeders that allow birds to defecate on feeding surfaces. Clean feeders every two weeks (in the dishwasher, or using soapy water followed by a rinse with 10% bleach solution). Always keep feed dry. Regularly eliminate feed from the ground. Wear gloves and wash hands after handling feeders. Pets should never be allowed to play with or consume sick or dead birds.

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