



# Feed the birds

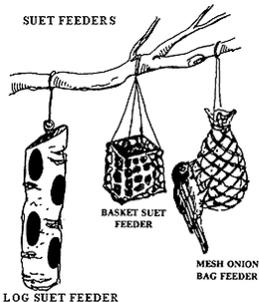


## Tips to reduce bacterial outbreaks among birds at your feeders



### BACKGROUND

During late winter and early spring, large flocks of redpolls often visit bird feeders. Redpolls' habitat of eating and defecating in the same spot set the stage for a classic example of disease transmission. Many strains of bacteria occur naturally in birds. As you increase the number of birds using a feeder, the odds of one of those birds carrying harmful bacteria increase. Redpolls pick up the bacteria when they consume seed that has been in contact with contaminated feces.



Symptoms of infected birds include signs of stress such as: shivering, puffing out of feathers, drooping head and/or wings, loss of appetite and appearing "tame" or easily approached. Once birds are infected, they cannot be treated. If you find a dead bird, use a plastic bag or gloves to pick it up and put it in the trash. If you feel uncomfortable about the chance of exposing yourself, your pets, or your kids to possible infection, take your feeders down until the large flocks move on. The birds will find other sources of food.

### MAINTENANCE NOTES to provide a safe feeding environment

**Try to use birdfeeders that can be easily washed and disinfected.** Those made with plastic or metal are best.

**Keep them clean!** Rinse your feeder in a 10% bleach solution twice a month to kill microorganisms found in bird feces and be sure to keep seeds fresh. This is especially important when large numbers of birds are visiting your feeder and when temperatures climb above zero. Check for mold and do not use seeds that have been stored for extended periods of time. Old seeds and hulls should be swept up to avoid the build up of pathogen communities and water should be changed regularly.

**Follow these simple steps to clean and disinfect your birdfeeders.** If possible, avoid washing bird feeders in your sink as bacteria can spread.

1. Disassemble all parts and wash with hot, soapy water
2. Rinse with clean water
3. Soak all parts for at least 10 minutes in a 10% bleach solution.
4. Rinse with clean water & allow to dry.

The same process applies to bird baths as well. Change water frequently and disinfect with a 10% bleach solution at least twice a month.

**Remember to wash your hands with hot, soapy water.**