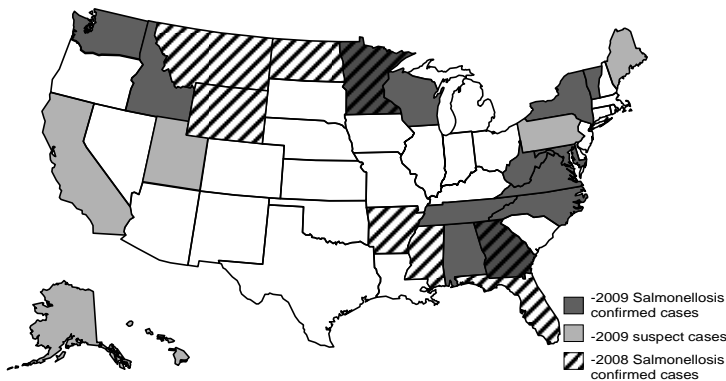


**To: Natural Resource/Conservation Managers**  
**From: USGS National Wildlife Health Center**  
**Title: Avian Salmonellosis in Wild Birds**  
**Date: April 29, 2009**

The USGS National Wildlife Health Center (NWHC) is tracking reports and investigating several recent outbreaks of salmonellosis in wild birds across the country (see map). Concerned citizens have reported finding dead or sick wild birds near their homes and bird feeders. Species primarily affected include pine siskins, common redpolls, and various finches. Recent cases of salmonellosis in humans and numerous product recalls have heightened public concern. Over 2,000 strains of *Salmonellae* are known, but there currently is no evidence that the strains found in dead wild birds this year are the same strains of *Salmonella* spp. that prompted the recalls in peanuts, pistachios, or wild bird seed. Mortalities of passerines using feeding stations are common across the United States and often peak in late winter and spring, with smaller outbreaks of salmonellosis reported year-round. This year's mortality estimates do not appear to be higher than previous years.

### Recent Salmonellosis Cases by State



Avian salmonellosis is a bacterial disease caused by *Salmonella typhimurium*. Transmission occurs by direct contact between birds, from contaminated surfaces/environments, or ingestion of contaminated food or water. There are no definitive signs of salmonellosis in wild birds. Some infected birds may be carriers and appear healthy, while others may have notable signs of disease such as lethargy, ruffled feathers, droopy head, diarrhea, and emaciation. Necropsy and bacterial cultures are necessary to confirm salmonellosis.

Disease outbreaks often are associated with bird feeding stations that can become contaminated with *Salmonella* spp. from feces of infected birds. Infected birds can shed salmonella bacteria in feces for weeks. Regular cleaning of feeders with warm, soapy water to remove organic debris followed by disinfection with a bleach (10%) and water solution, then rinsed well and dried thoroughly helps prevent spreading diseases to healthy birds. To prevent birds from congregating in a potentially affected area, clean bird feeders and remove them for at least 2-4 weeks after an outbreak. It also is important to properly dispose of waste seed and bird droppings below feeders because they can be contaminated as well. Secure storage of bird seed in containers not accessible to rodents and flies can prevent another potential source of *Salmonella* spp. contamination.

Avian salmonellosis can pose a health risk to people if exposed. Symptoms appear similar to food poisoning, such as diarrhea and acute gastroenteritis. Standard sanitary precautions, such as wearing gloves and thorough hand washing, should be taken when removing bird carcasses or materials potentially soiled by bird feces. If *Salmonella* spp. infection is suspected, one should seek appropriate medical attention.

Pets also are susceptible to salmonellosis and may experience similar signs to humans if infected. Precautions should be taken to keep pets away from dead birds or contaminated materials. If *Salmonella* infection is suspected in a pet, seek appropriate veterinary care.

Concerned citizens may contact their local or state wildlife authority to report dead or sick birds in their area believed to be affected by salmonellosis or other diseases.

**To report or request assistance for wildlife mortality/health issues/events visit**

[http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/mortality\\_events/reporting.jsp](http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/mortality_events/reporting.jsp) or contact Dr. Krysten Schuler, 608-270-2447, [kschuler@usgs.gov](mailto:kschuler@usgs.gov), Dr. Anne Ballmann, 608-270-2445, [aballmann@usgs.gov](mailto:aballmann@usgs.gov) or Jennifer Bradsby, 608-270-2400 ext. 2362, [jbradsby@usgs.gov](mailto:jbradsby@usgs.gov).

**Web sites for additional information:**

USGS National Wildlife Health Center:

[http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/disease\\_information/other\\_diseases/salmonellosis.jsp](http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/disease_information/other_diseases/salmonellosis.jsp)

Pamphlet on Coping with Diseases at Bird Feeders (PDF)

[http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/publications/pamphlets/coping\\_with\\_birdfeeder\\_diseases\\_pamplet.pdf](http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/publications/pamphlets/coping_with_birdfeeder_diseases_pamplet.pdf)

North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS), Food and Drug Protection

Division: <http://www.ncagr.gov/fooddrug/feed/BirdFoodRecallFAQ.htm>

WILDLIFE HEALTH BULLETINS are distributed to natural resource/conservation agencies to provide and promote information exchange about significant wildlife health threats in their geographic region. If you'd like to be added to or removed from the mailing list for these bulletins, please contact Gail Moede Rogall at 608-270-2438 or e-mail: [gmrogall@usgs.gov](mailto:gmrogall@usgs.gov).