



## Clean bird feeders to help protect cardinals and other birds

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has received reports of sick and dead cardinals in north Florida from concerned residents who have bird feeders. Artificial feeding stations, such as bird feeders, can draw large numbers of birds into one area. Cleaning bird feeders can decrease the potential for spreading diseases.

Initial reports via [the online wild bird mortality surveillance system](#) came in from northwest Florida (Santa Rosa, Bay and Holmes counties). Three to four weeks later, reports came in from north central Florida (Dixie, Marion, Flagler and Duval counties). Observations of other dead songbird species were rare in these reports.

Sick cardinals appear to move slowly, often hiding in ground vegetation with limited ability to fly. They seem capable of only short flight distances a few feet off the ground.

The FWC collected two cardinal carcasses and submitted them to the USGS National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wisconsin, where laboratory evaluation confirmed the birds were infected with salmonella species. These bacteria are transmitted by ingestion of contaminated feces. For this reason it is very important to clean bird feeders regularly, especially during disease outbreaks.

### **If you have bird feeders, take the time to follow the guidelines below to minimize the risk of disease transmission:**

- **Use a diluted bleach solution to clean your bird feeders every two to three weeks.** First, discard old feed. Then, while wearing gloves, use a scrub brush and soapy water to remove crusted material from the feeder. Next, soak the feeder in a 1:10 bleach solution for 10 minutes. Rinse the feeder with water and place in a sunny area to dry thoroughly before use.
- **Clean birdbaths in a similar fashion.**
- **Minimize crowding at feeders.** Provide enough feeders spaced far enough apart so birds do not have to jostle each other for space at a feeder.
- **Rake clean any debris (feed and bird feces) that accumulates around the feeder area.**
- **Do not clean bird feeders and birdbaths near human living and eating areas. Salmonella can cause illness in people,** so it is best to take precautions such as wearing rubber gloves and washing hands thoroughly.

If you observe dead cardinals or other dead songbirds in your yard, remove your bird feeders for a period of at least two weeks. Report your observations to the [wild bird mortality surveillance system](#) at [MyFWC.com/Bird](http://MyFWC.com/Bird).

Additional information on salmonella in songbirds can be found at the [U.S. Geological Survey National Wildlife Health Center](#).

Photos available on the FWC's Flickr site: <http://bit.ly/2qSwmiR>

Suggested Tweet: Help protect cardinals and other #birds by cleaning your bird feeder. @MyFWC: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/FLFFWCC/bulletins/19936fb> #Florida

QUESTIONS? [Contact the FWC](#)