

Trichomonas gallinae.

The pigeon/dove families have long been known to suffer from Trichomonosis caused by the single celled parasite *Trichomonas gallinae*. The parasite causes disease and swelling at the back of the throat and in the gullet which eventually prevents food and air reaching the crop and lungs respectively. While killed by dehydration, regurgitated food or water allows survival and the opportunity for the parasite to spread; this can include other species such as greenfinch (2006 – 2009 population decline), chaffinch, bullfinch and house sparrows. It is very infectious.

While captive birds can be treated, in wild birds it is normally fatal and can only be positively diagnosed by post mortem. However, a pigeon or dove at the feeding station showing lethargy and fluffed up feathers indicate ill health and a cause for concern. If the bird continues to visit it may be possible to detect a lump in the normally smooth curve from bill to breast when seen in silhouette. This would be sufficient evidence to stop ground feeding for 2 to 4 weeks to encourage dispersal of birds and thus reduce the spread of infection. All feeders should be soaked in neat bleach solution out in the fresh air (wear rubber gloves and eye protection) for at least 20 minutes before washing with running water (not a pressure hose) and allowing to dry thoroughly.

For more information see: www.gardenwildlifehealth.org

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