

Trichomoniasis

Alternatively known as frounce or canker, this ailment is caused by an organism called *Trichomonas gallinae*, a motile single celled protozoan that lives in the sinuses, mouth and throat of birds and which, under certain conditions, can multiply out of control. It has become a well known garden disease after the noticeable effect that it has had on Greenfinches in recent years.

Rescue Centres tend to see it more in pigeons and doves, as well as the Birds of Prey that feed on birds such as Sparrowhawks, Kestrels and Tawny Owls. It is most prevalent in warm, damp weather, particularly late Summer/early Autumn.



Characterised by yellow/white lesions in the mouth and throat of the bird, a thick, mucoid saliva and swellings around the eyes, the organism will grow until eventually the bird cannot feed properly and dies of starvation or predation. The more advanced the disease is, the more difficult it is to treat.

Other signs of the disease that would be noticeable to members of the public would be birds that have dirty looking beaks with patches of wet feathers around the beak area and swollen eyes. Any birds that have difficulty swallowing food are fluffed up, lethargic and slow to fly off will also need help. It should be noted that this is a disease of birds only and cannot be passed on to cats, dogs, rabbits or humans.

It is believed that the increase in the spread of this disease in recent years is due partly to a lack of hygiene around bird feeding and watering stations. A bird with trichomoniasis drinking from a bird bath is likely to pass the disease on to other and so continue the spread of the disease.

Disinfectants are all very well BUT the only definitive way to kill *trichomonas gallinae* is by desiccation, ie drying out. Leaving feeders and especially bird baths to dry out after washing them is vital. A recommended drying time is 48 hours or at the very least (when regularly cleaned, ie weekly) 24 hours.

You can help combat the spread of this disease:-

- **Clean, disinfect and dry out your feeders for 48 hours, then**
- **Clean and completely dry out bird tables and bird baths, weekly**
- **Completely change drinking water daily, do not just top up**
- **Spread feed stations out to reduce crowding**
- **Make drainage holes in any exposed tables to prevent moisture build up**



- **Catch any sick birds and pass them to your nearest wildlife centre for treatment**