

 West Lothian Council	Environmental Health		SUBJECT: Bird Feeding
		Food Safety/Food Hygiene	NUMBER: PH08
Revised: 18/11/19		Health & Safety	
	✓	Public Health	
STATUS: PUBLIC ADVICE		Pollution Control	
	✓	Pest Control/Dog Warden	

Information Sheet PH08 Bird Feeding without Problems

Feeding birds in gardens is widespread and is valuable in conserving garden bird numbers, particularly in the winter months. It also gives pleasure to many to see birds feeding in their garden. The RSPB recommend that fresh water and shelter are necessary in the winter to help birds.

What's the problem?

However, the numbers of rats and mice in built up areas is on the increase. Unsuitable or excessive bird feeding methods contribute to this rise. Excessive or careless bird feeding can also cause noise and fouling problems for neighbours, particularly where larger birds such as pigeons, crows, magpies or seagulls are attracted. The larger birds will sometimes discourage the smaller birds from feeding. Most people would be horrified to think they were attracting rats and mice to their gardens or causing problems for neighbours.

Good Practice

If you feed birds in your garden please follow these guidelines:

- Do not scatter food on the ground where it is an easy source of food for rodents
- Bird tables are often easily accessible to rodents. Do not overstock them or provide large quantities or unsuitable foods.
- Use proprietary bird feeders with a catch tray to reduce debris falling on the ground.
- Feeders should be sited with care. Suspending them from a metal wire is the only way to be certain rodents will not get into them.
- Ideally, place small quantities in feeders daily to ensure they are emptied daily.
- Do not use your garden as a dump for unwanted food waste, the birds may not want it either but rats and mice probably will.

If you want to give the birds a real treat and cut down the chance of a blocked drain, save any solid fat from cooking and fill up a yoghurt tub or similar. This can then be tipped out and hung up outside for the birds to enjoy. See www.scottishwater.co.uk.

What can West Lothian Council do about it?

In extreme cases, we can serve an Abatement Notice under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 or take action under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949. Alternatively,

where it may be part of a neighbour dispute, antisocial behaviour laws could be used. However, we do not wish to limit responsible bird feeding and will only take formal action where the feeding is excessive and large birds and / or rodents are a problem.

More Information

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is the best source of information. Their web site is at www.rspb.org.uk. Advice on feeding can be found at <http://www.rspb.org.uk/advice/helpingbirds/feeding/index.asp>.

For further information and advice, contact Environmental Health Environmental Health & Trading Standards, West Lothian Civic Centre, Howden South Road, Livingston, EH54 6FF, Tel: 01506 280000, Environmentalhealth@westlothian.gov.uk