

THE HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS OF CANADA GEESE

Barry and Margaret Williamson

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The following quotations were taken from articles during a brief search of the internet. They are a relatively small selection from much more that can be found on this vexatious and increasing problem.

We have underlined phases which are of particular relevance to our situation.

Bacteria

One of the harmful diseases that Canada geese can carry are parasites. These come in the form of chlamydiosis, e-coli, listeria, pasteurilla multocida and salmonella. There are three ways these birds shed these bacteria: faeces, nasal discharge and biting.

Because e-coli is so closely correlated to temperature, the likelihood of its presence is much higher during the warmer months rather than in the cold. These bacteria usually manifest themselves in humans through pneumonia or a wound. The risk of contracting any of these diseases, however, is low unless you deal directly with the faeces of geese.

Parasites

The types of parasites that geese can carry are cryptosporidium, giardia and toxoplasmosis. The symptoms from these parasites include diarrhoea and infection, especially if your immune system is low. The ways infection can occur is through eating a goose that is under-cooked or drinking contaminated water. If you have plans to swim in any lake, pond, or beach area that has geese present, use caution.

Viruses

Canada geese belong to the group of birds that can contract avian influenza, more commonly known as fowl plague. In 2004, Canadian geese were confirmed to have the possibility to contract H5N1, a type of influenza that causes severe respiratory disease in birds. Currently, scientists are continuing research to help gauge the concern for this virus.

Protect Yourself

While some of these risks are relatively low unless you regularly come into contact with these birds, it is still important to know the potential harm and how to avoid it.

Avoid Faeces

If you have to come in contact with geese faeces, make sure you wear protective gloves and wash your hands thoroughly after you are done. If children have been playing in a grass area that is frequented by geese it very important to wash their hands, shoes and toys they

were playing with. Because small children frequently place their fingers in their mouths, good hygiene is imperative.

Clean Your Paws & Shoes

If you bring your pets with you outdoors in areas that have geese, make sure to wash the bottoms of their feet before you let them in the house. Let this rule apply to you as well. Clean your shoes before entering your home. Your carpeting can become a source if you are not careful.

Bacterial diseases

Salmonella. ...

Escherichia coli. ...

Vibrio cholerae. ...

Pasteurella multocida/avian cholera. ...

Campylobacter – Helicobacter. ...

Yersinia. ...

Clostridium botulinum/avian botulism. ...

Brachyspira.

Faeces

Canada geese, on average, drop between 1 to 1.5 pounds of faeces every day! Hosting a population of 20 birds would be the same as having someone spread 20-30 lbs of bacteria contaminated biohazard on your lawn every day. Most people aren't aware, but these birds can present a real threat to humans and pets alike.

One of the biggest downsides to a Canada goose presence in your neighbourhood is the gross, unsightly faecal matter they leave all over walkways. In problem areas, people often have to dance around to avoid stepping in poop! While it's definitely disgusting, there's also a hidden danger tied to goose droppings: dangerous diseases and bacteria like E Coli, Salmonella, Histoplasmosis, Campylobacter, Coccidia, and Giardia.

Mowing

I think the **biggest risk** would come during the mowing, when the "poop" is flying around. After things settle down I think the risk would go down considerably. Most of this bacteria would infect you through **ingesting the agent**. The most likely scenario for infection would be if you mowed the grass, and then went inside and made a sandwich. Just be sure to wash your hands and/or shower immediately after mowing and you'll see less risk.

Dogs

Most healthy pets have a robust immune system. However, pets (especially dogs) enjoy exploring the world through their tongues. If you've ever taken your dog to a park with a goose population, you've more than likely had to stop your dog from devouring goose

droppings. Dogs can easily acquire Coccidia and Giardia from this nasty habit. Dogs might also drink water contaminated by goose droppings, magnifying that risk. Always keep your dogs on a leash to prevent them from snacking on unsanitary things, and make sure you provide them with fresh water when they are thirsty.

Seniors

Seniors have a much harder time shrugging off common illnesses than their juniors. Luckily years of life experience and wisdom usually results in caution, limiting the risk of a serious infection (unlike children). However, if an infection gets a chance to take hold, the results can be devastating. A population of Canada geese residing at a senior living community could dramatically increase this risk.

Specific Hazards

Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*) faeces have been shown to contain pathogenic protozoa and bacteria in numerous studies over the past 15 years. Further, increases in Canada geese populations translate to a greater presence of these human pathogens in public areas, such as recreational freshwater beaches. Pathogens of potential concern include *Campylobacter jejuni*, *Salmonella Typhimurium*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Helicobacter canadensis*, *Arcobacter* spp., Enterohemorrhagic *Escherichia coli* pathogenic strains, *Chlamydia psitacci*, *Cryptosporidium parvum* and *Giardia lamblia*. Scenarios presenting potential exposure to pathogens eluted from faeces include bathers swimming in lakes, children playing with wet and dry sand impacted by geese droppings and other common recreational activities associated with public beaches.

Distribution

Canada goose droppings, collected in parks to which the public had access, were screened for a range of bacteria that could be pathogenic in man. Droppings of Canada geese, and other waterfowl, did contain such bacteria, including some that are well-known causes of illness in man. These bacteria, plus a species of *Salmonella* that was experimentally inoculated into droppings, were shown to survive and multiply in the droppings for up to one month after their deposition by geese. Canada geese ranged further from water than other waterfowl species and thus distributed their droppings over a larger area of park grassland. This more widespread distribution of their droppings leads Canada geese to pose a greater potential health risk than other waterfowl studied here.

Etc.