

# Wildlife Officials Investigating Dove Deaths in West Texas

AUSTIN – State and federal wildlife officials are investigating a series of active dove mortality events in and around the West Texas communities of Midland, Odessa and Big Spring. The cause has yet to be determined, but poisoning has not been ruled out. At this time, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department simply desires to provide hunters information on this localized event.

Dove samples have been submitted to the U.S. Geological Survey's National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, WI, where initial necropsy findings revealed no conclusive cause of death, according to Dr. LeAnn White, a wildlife disease specialist. Additional disease screening and toxicology test results are pending.

Although there are no known human or animal risks associated with the mortality events at this time, Dr. White recommends precautions should be taken. One Midland resident reported his dog died shortly after consuming several dead doves, but no autopsy was performed and cause of death was not determined. Conversely, several residents have reported dogs and cats consuming dead doves with no ill effects.

Reports of dead doves and sparrows first surfaced in late July and have been sporadic but ongoing, although the total number of birds impacted so far is believed to be less than 250, mostly Eurasian collared dove and white-winged dove.

“Our biggest concern right now is the timing of these events heading into the opening day of dove hunting season this Saturday,” said Clayton Wolf, TPWD Wildlife Division Director. “We want hunters to be aware of this, but until we know the cause of death, there’s not much we can tell those hunters other than to use the standard common sense precautions that should be applied to the harvest of all game animals.”

Hunters should avoid shooting at birds exhibiting odd behavior or picking up birds not shot by them or someone in their hunting group. Hunters should never consume any game that appears infected or diseased. All dove killed still count toward a hunter’s bag limit. However, dove that appear infected or diseased are not required to be retained or kept in edible condition.

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Birds exhibiting a healthy disposition prior to harvest should not pose a concern. As with all wild game, hunters should properly clean and prepare dove.

Officials anticipate additional test results in the next few days. Updates on the investigation, including lab test results, will be posted online at [http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/game\\_management/dove\\_summary/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/game_management/dove_summary/)