

News from the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department
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NO SALMONELLA IN N.H. WILD TURKEY DROPPINGS

CONCORD, N.H. -- Specimens from a second year of monitoring wild turkey droppings collected on New Hampshire dairy farms have once again all tested negative for the presence of Salmonella bacteria. That's good news for wildlife managers and farmers in New Hampshire, who are concerned about possible transmission of Salmonella from wild turkeys to dairy livestock. The screening was part of a continuing collaborative effort between New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services and the University of New Hampshire to better understand the impacts of winter turkey congregations on dairy farms in New Hampshire.

In 2005, 139 samples of turkey droppings, systematically collected from 12 New Hampshire dairy farms, all tested negative for Salmonella. In 2006, 16 dairy farms located in the Connecticut River Valley were included in the study. An effort was made to collect 5 samples per month per farm for the period January-March, 2006. The lack of snow during 2006 discouraged turkey activity at some farms, with the result being that only 5 northern farms and 7 southern farms were sampled. A total of 131 samples, representing 393 turkeys, were collected. All samples tested negative for Salmonella.

"Dairy farms play a critical role in the ecology of wild turkeys in northern New England. We're delighted to be able to report that based on two years of intensive sampling, there is no evidence to indicate that wild turkeys are a source of Salmonella on New Hampshire dairy farms, even in those locations where large winter congregations of turkeys gather," said Mark Ellingwood, a wildlife biologist with the Fish and Game Department. "Because dairy farms are so important to the distribution and abundance of turkeys in northern New England, all turkey enthusiasts owe dairy farmers our gratitude for their willingness to accommodate turkeys in and around their farms. We had an obligation to address their concerns."

Ellingwood noted that over the past 30 years (since they were successfully reintroduced into New Hampshire by the Fish and Game Department), the wild turkey population has grown from 25 birds transplanted from New York in 1975, to approximately 30,000 birds today.

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