



# Angel Wing Syndrome

## Please Don't Feed Us Bread

Angel Wing is a condition that affects waterfowl, such as Trumpeter Swans. The condition causes the last joint of the wing (carpus/wrist) to twist making their primary flight feathers point laterally outwards. This abnormality prevents the feathers from laying flat against the body. It can be evident in one or both wings. This condition renders the bird flightless for life. It is rarely curable in young cygnets, and incurable in adult birds.

It presents itself when young swans are fed a high-calorie diet with excessive intake of carbohydrates, especially those high in protein, and low in vitamins. It is theorized feeding waterfowl foods like bread and popcorn are considered one of the leading causes of Angel Wing. However, it is believed genetics may also play a role.

Early Stage  
6 weeks old



Photo Courtesy of Barb Philips

Early Stage  
8 weeks old



Photo Courtesy of Joanne Muis Redwood

Early Stage  
8 weeks old



Photo Courtesy of Joanne Muis Redwood

Both Wings  
12 weeks old



Photo Courtesy of Gary Alwyn Lane

A diet of natural wild forage is the best food for the swans. They will naturally gravitate to the best natural food sources. Swans are grazers, preferring cattails, bulrushes, pickerel weed, and mixed shallow marshy type vegetation. The parents will also pump their feet to stir up the bottom dislodging small crustaceans and vegetation for their cygnets.

There are more nutritional foods humans can provide such as whole untreated corn. We recognize feeding waterfowl provides entertainment and joy to many people and it is difficult to control. We kindly ask you to refrain from feeding them inappropriate food such as bread, especially to young cygnets.

Outside of Angel Wing, bread may also cause a swan's crop to become impacted. The combination of bread mixed with water can cause a thick doughy ball to form in the swan's crop. At that point, food can no longer pass to the stomach and the swan will eventually starve to death. The impacted dough ball can only be surgically removed.