

# Pick Up After Your Pet to Protect Water Quality

Pet waste is a form of non-point source pollution that can have devastating impacts. Do your part to protect water quality by picking up after your pet and properly disposing of the waste.

## WHY IS PET WASTE A CONCERN?

The majority of water pollution comes from small, cumulative sources. As rain falls on the ground, excess runoff collects, flows, and transports soil, pet waste, salt, pesticides, fertilizer, oil and grease, litter and other pollutants. These pollutants combine together and are referred to as non-point source pollution or NPS. NPS is the leading cause of water quality problems in the US.

## WHY PICK UP AFTER MY DOG? WON'T THE RAIN WASH IT AWAY?

There are a lot of pets, producing a lot of waste, and while pet waste is not the most significant pollutant, it can contribute to pollution levels over time. Every time it rains the potential exists for thousands of pounds of pet waste to wash down storm drains and into streams, rivers and lakes. Pet waste may pose a health threat to plants, animals, wetlands and watercourses, as well as fish, swimmers and even other pets. It can pollute the water, cause algae blooms, and lead to beach closures.

## HEALTH RISKS POSSIBLY ASSOCIATED WITH PET WASTE

Pet waste can contain bacteria and parasites, causing infections such as the following:

- **Campylobacteriosis:** A bacterial infection that causes diarrhea in humans.
- **Giardiasis:** A protozoan infection of the small intestine that can cause diarrhea, cramping, fatigue, and weight loss.

- **Salmonellosis:** Symptoms include fever, muscle and head aches, vomiting, diarrhea.
- **Toxocariasis:** An animal-to-human infection that is caused by roundworms found in the intestines of dogs. The parasite can cause vision loss, rash, fever, or cough, and is a particular threat to children exposed to parasite eggs in sand and soil.

## I ONLY HAVE A SMALL DOG; IT CAN'T REALLY HARM THE WATER, CAN IT?

It can be hard to picture how a single dog depositing a small amount of waste can result in water pollution. However, studies have shown that the combined impact of all pets within a watershed can be significant when it comes to water quality and human health.



## BE AWARE

- When animal waste ends up in the water, it decomposes, using up oxygen. During summer months, low dissolved -oxygen levels harm fish and other aquatic life
- Lakes rivers and streams may be closed for fishing or water contact activities if disease-causing bacteria and virus levels are too high. Pet waste can be a cause of test results that close waterbodies to human contact – this includes Mirror lake too!
- Devens requires pet owners to pick up and remove fecal matter from public property. Fines can be imposed on those caught violating these laws.

## BUT PET WASTE IS NATURAL?

- However, efficient road drainage systems make it easy for pet waste to travel far and reach wetland and watercourses.
- Waste left on the ground either passes through storm sewers untreated or washes directly into lakes, and streams.
- Pet waste is unpleasant and can pose health risks when left on lawns, parks, sidewalks or other public and private places.
- To make sure your pet isn't contributing to the problem, always clean up after your pet and deposit waste in an appropriate manner. It is not fertilizer.

## QUICK TIPS

- Reuse old bags (e.g. grocery, sandwich, newspaper, produce, or bread bags) to pick up and contain pet waste.
- Buy compostable non-plastic bags for more environmentally responsible disposal.
- Keep a supply of bags near your dog's leash. Tie bags onto the leash if you don't have a pocket or pack.

## DO MORE TO PROTECT WETLANDS AND WATERCOURSES

- Always carry a bag to pick up your pet's waste.
- Do not throw pet waste near a storm drain; use a trash can. Pet waste can also be flushed down a toilet, but please don't flush the bag.
- Make sure to dispose of pet waste in a sealed bag, so it doesn't spill during trash collection.
- Pick up pet or wildlife waste from your property and properly dispose of it.
- Obey local leash laws.
- Remember:



## For More Information:

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