

MS4 Education



Pet Waste & Water Quality

Pet owners, take heed...When you clean up after your pet, do you dump the waste in the street or storm sewer? Do you leave it to decay on the sidewalk or grass near the street? If so, you may be causing pollution or health problems.

Are you polluting our creek?

Pollutants from improperly disposed pet waste may be washed into the storm sewers by rain or melting snow. Our storm sewers drain directly into the creek, carrying many pollutants along with the water.

Pollutants commonly found in lakes, streams, and creeks include:

- Pet Waste
- Oil and Antifreeze
- Sediment
- Toxic Chemicals
- Pesticides
- Fertilizers

When Pet waste is washed into lakes or streams the waste decays, using up oxygen and releasing ammonia. Low oxygen levels and ammonia combined with warm temperatures can kill fish.

Pet waste also contains nutrients that encourage weed & algae growth. Overly fertile water becomes cloudy & green-unattractive for swimming, boating, & fishing.

Perhaps most importantly, **pet waste carries diseases which make water unsafe for swimming or drinking.**

Are you risking YOUR health?

When pet waste is disposed of improperly, not only water quality suffers-your health may be at risk, too. Pets, children who play outside, and adults who garden are most at risk for infection from some of the bacteria & parasites found in pet waste. Flies may also spread diseases from animal waste. Diseases or parasites that can be transmitted from pet waste to humans include:

Campylobacteriosis	A bacterial infection carried by dogs and cats that frequently causes diarrhea in humans.
Cryptosporidium	A protozoan parasite carried by dogs, cats, mice, calves and many other mammals. Common symptoms include diarrhea, stomach cramps, nausea and dehydration. May be fatal to people with depressed immune systems.
Toxocariasis	Roundworms usually transmitted from dogs to humans, often without noticeable symptoms, but may cause vision loss, a rash, fever, or cough.
Toxoplasmosis	A protozoan parasite carried by cats that can cause birth defects such as mental retardation and blindness if a woman becomes infected during pregnancy; also a problem for people with depressed immune systems. Symptoms include headache, muscle aches, lymph node enlargement.

Pet waste may not be the largest or most toxic pollutant in urban waterways, but it is one of the many little sources of pollution that add up to a big problem. Fortunately, there are some simple things we can all do to help keep our water clean.

You can make a difference

The job of cleaning up after your pet can be as simple as taking a plastic bag or pooper scooper along on your next walk. What should you do with the waste you pick up? No solution is perfect, but here are the choices:

2. Bury it in the yard.

1. Flush it down the toilet.

Dig a hole or trench that is;

The water from your toilet goes to a septic system or sewage treatment plant that removes most pollutants before the water reaches a lake or stream.

To prevent plumbing problems, don't try to flush debris such as rocks, sticks or cat litter. Cat feces may be scooped out and flushed down the toilet, but used litter should be put in a securely closed bag in the trash.

- About 5 inches deep
- Away from vegetable gardens
- Away from any lake, stream, ditch or well.

Microorganisms in the top layer of soil will break down the waste and release nutrients to fertilize nearby plants.

Be cautious. Keep pet waste away from vegetable gardens and water supplies to prevent disease. Don't add pet waste to your compost pile. The pile won't get hot enough to kill disease organisms in pet waste.

3. Put it in the trash

This is not the best solution. Waste taken to landfill or incinerator can still cause pollution problems.

Another option is to install an underground pet waste digester that works like small septic tank. Before buying one, check local laws that may restrict their use, design or location.

A few words of caution

Around Your Home-If you leave pet waste to decay in your yard, be sure it does not become a problem. To prevent water pollution, clean up areas near wells, storm drains, ditches and waterways. Always remove waste from areas where children play. They are the most frequent victims of diseases from pet waste. Of course, the best protection for children and adults is washing hands with soap and water.

In Your Community-Many communities have "pooper scooper" laws that govern pet waste cleanup. Some of these laws specifically require anyone who takes an animal off their property to carry a bag, shovel, or pooper scooper. Any waste left by the animal must be cleaned up immediately.



DID YOU KNOW

Excess nutrients, specifically nitrogen and phosphorus, pollute stormwater run-off from urban areas, contributing to **the third greatest cause of lake deterioration** in the United States.

DID YOU KNOW

Leaf "litter" and landscape trash account for 5-6% of phosphorus in urban stormwater, not to mention clogging storm drains, causing potential flooding and increasing debris in our waterways.

DID YOU KNOW

The amount of phosphorus in grass clippings from mowing your lawn just once can produce up to **100 pounds** of unwanted algae if it ends up in our lakes and ponds.

DID YOU KNOW

Just one pound of fertilizer over-application on the average lawn can equate to **34.2 pounds** of excess algae growth in streams and lakes.

DID YOU KNOW

When you wash your car in the driveway, you're washing about **120 gallons** of grime-filled water downstream. The soap, together with the dirt, grease, and grime flows untreated into nearby storm drains that run into lakes and streams.

DID YOU KNOW

If dog owners don't clean up after their pooches, **390 million pounds** of poop can wash into our waterways every year in just Colorado! Dog waste contains 10% phosphates and 2% nitrates, contributing to algae growth.

Supporting Documents

2022 MS 4 Annual Report 5.8 MB



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