

Stormwater Pollution Prevention



Keeping Animal Waste out of the Water

Most of us don't think of animal waste as a major threat to the environment, animal waste is one of the many little sources of pollution that can create a large problem. When pet waste is disposed of improperly, not only water quality suffers, but your health may be at risk as well.

Animal waste contains several types of pollutants that contribute to water quality problems: nutrients, pathogens and a naturally toxic material, ammonia.

Fortunately, there are actions pet owners can take to help keep our water clean:

- Pick up pet waste from your yard. It is not a fertilizer nor is it recommended for back yard composting and should not be left to decay. Some diseases can be transmitted from pet waste to humans through soil contact.
- Remember to take along a plastic bag or pooper-scooper when you walk your dog.
- Dispose of pet waste properly by placing in tightly tied plastic bag and placing in your trash or flushing your pet's waste down the toilet to be treated at the wastewater treatment plant.
- Dispose of kitty litter properly: when cleaning out the litter box, a two-step approach is most effective. Cat waste may be scooped out and flushed down the toilet, and the used litter should be bagged, sealed and placed in your trash. Do not dump kitty litter in your toilet.

Pet waste also contains nutrients that encourage excess weed and algae growth. This water then becomes cloudy and green-unattractive for swimming, boating and fishing. Excess nutrients are a major cause of water quality decline. When pet waste is washed into lakes and streams, the waste decays, using up oxygen and sometimes releasing ammonia. Low oxygen levels and ammonia combined with warm temperatures can kill fish and other aquatic life.

Please do your part to help keep pet waste out of our waterways.