

# Pet Waste and Water Quality

## Are Fluffy and Spot Polluting Our Water?



### *How you and your pet can help protect our rivers and streams*

Are you leaving dog or cat waste on the ground near a ditch, stream, or storm drain? If so, you might be contributing to pollution or health problems.

As rainwater washes off streets, sidewalks, gardens, and lawns, it picks up harmful things such as oil, metals, grease, pesticides, fertilizers, and sediment. **The rain can also wash pet waste into storm drains and ditches. Most storm drains and ditches flow *directly into our local streams, not into a wastewater treatment plant.***

**Pet waste carries diseases that can sicken people.** Contaminated streams are unsafe for swimming or playing in. **Pet waste that gets washed into streams uses up oxygen when it begins to decay. Low oxygen levels harm aquatic animals and hurt stream health.**

**Fortunately, there are some simple things you can do to help keep our streams clean and healthy.** Cleaning up after your pet can be as simple as taking a plastic bag and paper towel along on your next walk. But what should you do with the waste you pick up? No solution is perfect, but here are the choices:

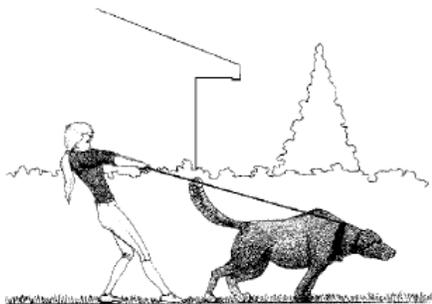
**Bury it in the yard.** Dig a hole or trench 6 inches deep and away from vegetable gardens, children's play areas, and at least 50 feet from streams, ditches, and wells. Microorganisms in the soil will break down the waste and release nutrients to the soil. *Don't add pet waste or kitty litter to your compost pile.* The compost won't get hot enough to kill disease-causing organisms.



**Flush it down the toilet.** The water from your toilet goes to your septic tank or to the wastewater plant. Make sure your septic system can handle the increased load. To prevent plumbing problems, don't flush rocks, sticks, or kitty litter. Cat feces may be scooped out and flushed, but used litter should be put in a securely closed bag in the garbage.

**Put it in the trash.** This may seem like the easiest solution, but it is not the best. Pet waste can cause health problems for garbage handlers and pollution problems at the landfill. Securely wrap the waste before putting it in the trash. Don't put it in the yard debris container.

**Around Your Home** – If you leave pet waste to decay in your yard, prevent water pollution by cleaning up areas near wells, ditches, streams, and storm drains.



*Thank you for doing your part to keep  
our water clean and safe.*



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