

## **PET WASTE AND WATER QUALITY**

### **What Is Storm Water Pollution?**

When rain flows over streets and other surfaces, it picks up pollutants and carries them into the storm water conveyance ("storm drain") system. This system is designed to prevent flooding by transporting water away from developed areas.



However, this water is not filtered or treated, and all the contaminants it contains eventually flow to our streams and wetlands.

Once there, polluted runoff can harm wildlife and habitats. Pet wastes are among the many common storm water pollutants that can degrade water quality.

Other examples include paint, oil, automotive fluids, construction debris, yard waste, pesticides, litter, pool chemicals, and dirty

### **Why Is It So Important To Pick Up After Your Pet?**

During rainfall, pet waste left on lawns, trails and sidewalks washes into storm drains. These wastes and the pathogens they contain (bacteria, parasites, and viruses) end up flowing directly into streams and wetlands where they can harm human health and the environment.

As pet wastes decompose, they demand a high level of oxygen from water. This demand can kill fish and plant life by reducing the amount of dissolved oxygen available to them.

This contamination can make people sick with sore throats, intestinal problems, rashes, nausea, and eye and ear infections.



### **Dangers of pet waste if not handled properly:**

- Spreads diseases between pets.
- Infects children and adults with disease-causing bacteria and parasites.
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When pet waste is disposed of improperly, not only does water quality and




pet health suffer, but our health may be at risk too. Pets and children who play in yards or in parks where pets defecate are most at risk for infection from disease-causing bacteria and parasites found in pet waste. Diseases that can be passed from pet waste to humans:

- **Campylobacteriosis** – a bacterial infection carried by dogs and cats that frequently causes diarrhea in humans.
- **Salmonellosis** – the most common bacterial infection transmitted to humans by other animals. Symptoms include fever, muscle aches, headache, vomiting, and diarrhea.
- **Toxocariasis** – roundworms usually transmitted from dogs to humans, often without noticeable symptoms, but may cause vision loss, a rash, fever, or cough.
- **Toxoplasmosis** – a parasite carried by cats that can cause birth defects if a woman becomes infected during pregnancy. Can also be a problem for people with depressed immune systems.



Pet waste left on the ground may wash into storm drains and end up in our streams. Our river water quality suffers. Pet waste, after being washed into our water resource areas, uses up oxygen when it begins to decay, causing harm to aquatic organisms and degrading river health. It can make our streams unsafe.

**PICK UP AFTER YOUR PET!**  
It's as easy as 1-2-3

1. **Bring a bag** 
2. **Clean it up** 
3. **Dispose of it properly (toilet or trash)** 

### What Can I Do?

The next time you're caught outside in the rain, take a look at what's running off the street, into the gutters, and down storm drain inlets.

You'll see that clean rainwater is quickly transformed into an oily, dirty mixture called urban runoff.

You can't see the bacteria and viruses in storm water runoff, but they're there.

Do your part to keep our water clean.