

# Pet Waste Fact Sheet



## WATER POLLUTION

Sources of water pollution like industrial wastes from factories have been greatly reduced in recent years. Now, more than 60% of water pollution comes from things like runoff from washing cars, fertilizer from farms and gardens, and pet waste. All these sources add up to a big pollution problem. So, believe it or not, the biggest source of water pollution today is not industry – it is actually households like yours. But each of us can do small things to help clean up our water. And it starts with realizing that *our sewers and storm systems are separate – what goes into storm drains flows directly into the environment, untreated.*

## WHAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH PET WASTE?

Pet waste is a health risk to pets and people, especially children. Pet waste is full of bacteria that can make people sick. If it's washed into the storm drain and ends up in our rivers, lakes, and streams, the bacteria ends up in our fish and aquatic life. Unless people take care of it, the waste enters our water with no treatment. In addition to transferring harmful pathogens to our water, pet waste also leads to increased biological oxygen demand, thus reducing the oxygen content of the water and making it difficult for aquatic life to survive.

## FACTS AND FIGURES

- An average size dog dropping contains three billion fecal coliform bacteria.
- In addition to fecal coliform, dogs can also be significant hosts of both Giardia and Salmonella. It was noted in a 1982 study of Baltimore, Maryland catchments that dog feces were the single greatest contributor of fecal coliform and fecal strep bacteria.
- According to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association, 40% of U.S. households include at least one dog. The association's statistics also show the growth in pet ownership: Americans owned 54.6 million dogs in 1996 and 68 million dogs in 2000.
- Those numbers add up to a lot of kibble. If all dog owners also owned and used a pooper-scooper, there would not be a problem. But several studies have found that roughly 40% of Americans don't pick up their dog's feces.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

How can you get rid of pet waste and help keep our waters clean?

- Scoop it up and flush it down the toilet. This is the best option because then your community sewage treatment plant or your septic system treats the pet waste.
- Seal the waste in a plastic bag and throw it in the garbage.
- Bury small quantities in your yard where it can decompose slowly. Dig a hole one foot deep, put three to four inches of waste at the bottom, and cover it with at least eight inches of soil. Bury the waste in several different locations in your yard and keep it away from vegetable gardens.

