

# Waste Not, Want Not

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## Leave the Poop-Scooping to the Pros

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) deemed pet waste a “nonpoint source of pollution” in 1991, which put poop in the same category as oil and toxic chemicals!

## Far from Fertilizer

Woof-woof waste does not a good fertilizer make. It is actually toxic to your lawn, causing burns and unsightly discoloring.

Beyond your grass, it has been estimated that a single gram of dog waste can contain 23 million [fecal coliform bacteria](#), which are known to cause cramps, diarrhea, intestinal illness, and serious kidney disorders in humans. EPA even estimates that two or three days' worth of droppings from a population of about 100 dogs would contribute enough bacteria to temporarily close a bay, and all watershed areas within 20 miles of it, to swimming and shell fishing.



Dog feces are one of the most common carriers of the following diseases:

- [Heartworms](#)
- [Whipworms](#)
- Hookworms
- Roundworms
- Tapeworms
- [Parvo](#)
- Corona
- [Giardiasis](#)
- Salmonellosis
- Cryptosporidiosis
- Campylobacteriosis

Why all this fanfare for feces, you may ask?

Well, EPA explains that the decay of your pet's waste actually creates nutrients for weeds and algae that grow in the waterways. As these organisms thrive on your dog's droppings, they overtake the water in a “Little Shop of Horrors-esque” manner, and limit the amount of light that can penetrate the water's surface. As a result, oxygen levels in the water decrease, and the fish and seafood we eat can be asphyxiated, EPA says.

## A Toxic Cycle

If you aren't worried about the state of your local waterways, you may be a bit more concerned about the impact of dog waste a little closer to home. The thing about persistently disposing of stools improperly (or not at all) is that it kicks off a harmful cycle that can affect your whole family—including your pet.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), pet droppings can contribute to diseases animals pass to humans, called zoonoses. When infected dog poop is deposited on your lawn, the eggs of certain roundworms and other parasites can linger in your soil for years. Anyone who comes into contact with that soil—be it through gardening, playing sports, walking barefoot or any other means—runs the risk of coming into contact with those eggs; especially your dog.

Some of the hard-to-pronounce parasites your lawn could harbor include *Cryptosporidium*, *Giardia*, *Salmonella*, as well as hookworms, ringworms and tapeworms. Infections from these bugs often cause fever, muscle aches, headache, vomiting, and diarrhea in humans. Children are most susceptible, since they often play in the dirt and put things in their mouths or eyes.

## What You Can Do

If you are far too harried to keep vigilant watch over your dog's leftovers, you may want to hire a pooper-scooper company to manage the dog waste. EPA discovered from a survey that 40 percent of the people who live in the area immediately surrounding the Chesapeake Bay—which experienced significant pollution throughout much of the 1990s—did not pick up after their dogs because it was “too much work.”

Others neglected to do so because they assumed it eventually goes away, or because the dog deposited the feces in an area far from the water, such as in the owner's yard or in the woods. For all of these reasons, EPA says, “The reluctance of many residents to handle dog waste is the biggest limitation to controlling pet waste.”

So, in essence, the cycle begins and ends with you. In the instance of the Chesapeake Bay survey, 44 percent of dog walkers who did not pick up after their dogs indicated they would still refuse to pick up—even if confronted by complaints from neighbors, threatened with fines, or provided with more sanitary and convenient options for retrieving and disposing of dog waste.

Perhaps if they knew there were services designed to put poop at their disposal, they would not let Rover's relief become their neighbors' nuisance.

### Sources

- [Environmental Protection Agency](#)
- [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- ***Whole Earth* magazine, Spring 1999**

Excerpted from [Let it Rot!: The Gardener's Guide to Composting](#), Stu Campbell. Third edition, 1998. 153 PP. Storey Books.

**Source:** DoodyCalls website; [http://www.doodycalls.com/resources\\_toxic\\_dog\\_waste.asp](http://www.doodycalls.com/resources_toxic_dog_waste.asp)