




The Scoop On Poop!

Protecting Water Quality Through Responsible Pet Ownership

Simply cleaning up after your dog in public places and on private property not only helps keep areas clean and hygienic, failure to do so leaves a mess for someone else to clean up, or step in! In Davidson County, dog waste left on the ground can find its way to nearby creeks and streams and ultimately to the Cumberland River. These contaminants can increase harmful bacteria levels in our waterways...negatively impacting water quality.

Health concerns are also a big motivation to clean up after your dog. There are many parasites that can be transmitted to humans via dog feces (roundworms, tapeworms, etc.). Other pathogens that can be transmitted to humans via dog feces include strains of the bacteria *E. coli*, Staphylococcus, Salmonella, and Listeria, to name just a few. *E.coli* is present in all feces. Even the cleanest of dogs (and people!) is going to pollute the ground with *E.coli* bacteria. Any of these pathogens may be picked up, for instance, if a diseased bird flies into your yard and your dog catches it and eats it.

Did you know?

 An estimated **85,000** pounds of dog poop are generated per day in Davidson County (that equates to **31,000,000** pounds of dog poop per year)!

PROPERLY DISPOSING OF YOUR DOG'S WASTES "QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS"

Q. Why should I pick up after my dog when other animals (squirrels, birds, etc.) already use the "great outdoors" as their bathroom? A. The poop from the large number of dogs in Davidson County cannot be adequately or naturally absorbed into the environment. Large, unnatural numbers of *any* animal in a small area can cause this problem -- not just dogs. Rural streams that are home to an unnaturally large number of deer have been found to have a high fecal coliform (a bacteria found in feces) levels as well.



Q. Why is dog poop bad for streams? A. There are two reasons. First, the microorganisms in dog poop can cause serious diseases in humans, including cholera and dysentery, if contaminated water comes in contact with an open wound or is ingested. Second, some bacteria require oxygen in order to live and, as a result, will reduce the amount of oxygen in the water that is available for fish. Many species of fish cannot survive in streams that have reduced oxygen levels.

Q. Why is dog poop bad for our waterways? A. Slower moving water, such as that found in creeks and streams, is susceptible to "algae blooms" responsible for large-scale fish kills. When it rains, fertilizer, dog poop and other nutrient-rich material gets carried into these waterways. This sudden, unnatural surge of nutrients causes a rapid explosion of the algae population, called a "bloom". The bloom, which is near the water's surface, blocks sunlight that is needed by other aquatic life. Additionally, when the bloom can no longer be sustained, it decays in an environmentally cataclysmic event that sucks all of the oxygen out of the water, suffocating and killing any fish that live there.

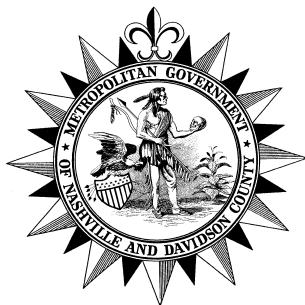
Q. I don't walk my dog near a stream. How does my dog's poop get there? A. Streams in Davidson County are fed in part by storm drains. The system of storm drains and underground pipes is, essentially, the replacement for the smaller streams that existed in your neighborhood before your neighborhood was built. When it rains, dog poop and other pollutants (litter, oil, etc.) are carried into the storm drains, through pipes, into nearby streams.

Q. Why doesn't the sewage treatment plant clean this water before it reaches the Cumberland River? A. The water treatment plant only processes wastewater from indoor plumbing. The sewage treatment plant does not have the ability, or the capacity, to treat rainwater, which is what the storm sewer system is designed to carry.

Q. Doesn't dog poop make good fertilizer? A. Dog poop contains microorganisms from your dog's digestive system that can be passed along to plants. A person can become ill by eating fruits or vegetables from a plant "fertilized" with dog poop. Don't use your dog's poop as fertilizer!

Q. What about the manure I buy at the hardware store? Doesn't this come from farm animals? A. Yes, the garden fertilizer manure does come from other animals. However, most store-bought manure has been composted or processed in some other way to make it safe and easy to use as a fertilizer.

Q. Is it illegal not to pick up poop in my own yard? A. There is no law that requires you to pick up the poop your pet leaves on your own property. However,



during a rainstorm, this poop can get washed out of your yard, down a storm drain and find its way into your local stream. Additionally, the large quantity of nutrients in dog poop can "burn out" grass plants by overfeeding them, creating a spotty "minefield" look in yards where poop isn't scooped. Lastly, poop can also attract rats. Please clean up your yard regularly!

Q. What is the best way to get rid of my dog's poop? A. Pick it up with a plastic bag, tie a knot in the bag and put it in a trash can. Do not throw the bag down a storm sewer. Throwing a bag of poop down a storm sewer will cause the poop to get into your nearby stream (when the bag eventually breaks) and the bag itself will end up as litter. You can use the plastic bag your newspaper comes in, or you can purchase special poop bags at most pet stores. You can also flush your dog's poop, *without a bag*, down the toilet. This will send the poop to the sewage treatment plant where it will be adequately treated before returning to the environment.

Q. I'm worried that I'll throw my dog's poop away but it will still end up in the environment. Where does the poop go after I throw it in the trash? A. Landfills are required by law to completely contain all trash and treat any leachate (liquid seepage) before it escapes back into the environment.

What is Storm Water Pollution?

Many people think most of the pollution in our waterways comes from large industries, corporations, and sewage treatment plants. But if all the sources of this pollution were eliminated tomorrow, over half the pollution would still remain. So where does all this pollution come from?

All of us - in our everyday activities - are in some way polluters. It's our detergents, pesticides, fertilizers, paints, litter, used motor oil, pet wastes, and other household hazardous products. Over time, these materials accumulate on our driveways, roadways, and other impervious surfaces such as parking lots.

When it rains, these materials are collected by the rainwater and carried directly into one of many storm drains located throughout Nashville/Davidson County. Anything going into these storm drains eventually flows into the Cumberland River.

These pollutants can cause serious, even life-threatening problems. But with minimal effort from everyone in the community, our waterways will become cleaner.



What is Being Done About Storm Water Pollution?

Protecting our environment has continued to be a major issue as we witness the adverse results of pollution caused by increases in urban development, construction, and population growth. As the general public's concern for the environment has grown, more attention has been placed on water quality, especially storm water quality.

In 1990, the Clean Water Act enacted federally mandated legislation that requires the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the United States to implement a National Storm Water Quality Control Program to specifically address the problem of storm water pollution. Thus, an "NPDES" (National Pollution Discharge Elimination System) permit was granted by the EPA and the State of Tennessee to the Metropolitan Government of Nashville/Davidson County.

The goal of the NPDES permit is to develop storm water pollution controls that are aimed at making our waterways fishable, swimmable, and environmentally safe for the residents and visitors of Nashville/Davidson County. Thanks for taking the time to learn more about the environmental impact of "unscooped" poop. The Metro Water Services Stormwater Management Team encourages you to be a responsible dog owner and to treat the environment gently. "Pure Nashville...right as rain"

Metro Water Services
Storm Water Div.-NPDES Office
1607 County Hospital Road
Nashville, TN 37218
Phone 880-2420

<http://www.nashville.gov/stormwater/>



Metro Water Services is in the process of complying with all appropriate Americans with Disabilities Act Guidelines. For additional information contact Joseph A. Estes, Sr., 1600 2nd Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37208-2206; telephone 615-862-4862.