

## **Dog Waste, an Environmental and Community Health Concern**

It is no laughing matter: failing to clean up after a dog can carry a hefty fine and penalties are going up—way up in some areas. The laws are on the books, and more and more areas are starting to enforce them.

“It’s a major public safety issue that hasn’t received much attention until recently, even though researchers have been studying the impact of pet waste on the environment for years,” says Jacob D’Aniello, cofounder and CEO of the nation’s leading pet waste removal service, DoodyCalls. “More people than ever before use plastic disposal bags to clean up after their pet, but there are still many owners who seem to be oblivious to the hazards to their communities.”

Most laws are similar—No person owning, keeping or having custody of a dog, except a seeing eye dog, shall allow or permit the dog to defecate or urinate on public property and each such person shall immediately remove dog excrement from any curb, gutter, alley or street.

Dog waste is hazardous. It’s a major source of potentially deadly E. coli and can contain up to 23 million fecal coli form bacteria. In 1991, it was labeled a non-point source pollutant by the Environmental Protection Agency, placing it in the same category as herbicides and insecticides; oil, grease and toxic chemicals; and acid drainage from abandoned mines. Unattended waste can also harm your health. While many of us don’t realize it, dog waste often carries bacteria, worms and other parasites that can be transmitted directly to humans and make them sick. Ringworm, roundworm, salmonella and giardia are examples of such bacteria, all of which are found in dog feces and are easily transferable upon contact. Roundworm, for example, is one of the most common parasites found in dog droppings and it can remain infectious in contaminated soil and water for years. In addition, dog waste can also be a common food source for rats. The presence of rats can decrease the property values of all nearby homes and presents a host of additional health concerns to residents themselves.

The best solution is a well-executed pet waste management plan involving regular common area cleanings and the introduction of pet waste stations into the community. The first step is picking up what your pet leaves behind. The second is making sure it is disposed of properly.

Pet waste should always be picked up and removed from your property on a regular basis. Ideally one should scoop the waste into a trash bag, then double-wrapping it with another bag and placing in the garbage to be collected and taken to the landfill. However, you should check to make sure this method of disposal is in accordance with local laws and regulations.

If you do follow the bag and garbage method, be sure to double bag the waste and tie knots at the top of both bags to ensure the waste is properly sealed. This is mainly to protect garbage collectors from coming into contact with the waste upon pickup. For those who prefer to wash their hands clean of the entire cleanup business, local pet waste removal services will gladly handle all of the messy work for you, including removal of accumulated waste heaps.

In any community, the presence of unattended dog waste can quickly become a major point of conflict amongst residents. In fact, it is the single-most talked about problem in homeowner association and property manager board meetings across the country. Keeping this waste off the ground is not just about being considerate to your neighbors and their lawns—it's also about protecting the environment, your family and the community. Don't let doggie doody get your community down. Be considerate of your community and pick up the poop.

*Written by: Dave Jensen, Doodycalls*