

It is that time of the year to remind residents who have dogs, the concerns of dog waste. Not necessarily a fun topic, but it is an environmental, health and neighbor consideration topic. From the Fairfax County website: Dog walkers are out in the morning before the workday begins and again in the evening. Most have something in common. They carry a bag, usually a grocery bag or the long plastic sleeve in which newspapers are delivered. These **conscientious pet owners take their waste-filled bags and put them in their household trash or flush the contents in the toilet.** What about the not-so-conscientious pet owners? **The Center for Watershed Protection refers to them as “bad dog walkers”.** The County’s pooper scooper law carries a \$250 fine. Pet waste left on the grass or in the woods makes its way to storm drains every time it rains. **Storm drains lead to lakes or streams that ultimately lead to the Occoquan Reservoir and the Potomac Rivers, our drinking water supply.** Pet waste may carry disease-causing organisms, which make water unsafe for swimming and more costly to treat for drinking. Dog waste pollutes our environment even if it is hidden in the bushes, under leaves or in the woods. Did you know that pet waste is the greatest source of potential health risk to your pets and to your family? First the medical issues: 1) common diseases that can be transmitted to dogs, cats and people through feces include giardia, roundworms, salmonella, and Ecoli.; 2) Your dog can spread or contract parvovirus or coronavirus through infected feces.; 3) Flies lay eggs in the feces and come into your home.; 4) You and your pet can walk in the waste and bring it into your home.; and 5) Your pets will clean their paws!

The cleanup of dog waste applies to your yard too! Nobody (to include pets) likes to walk through a yard that is has "doggie land

mines." Your pets will walk in the waste and bring it into your home. Nitrogen from dog poop is released much more slowly, so the longer you leave it on your lawn; the more likely it will be to negatively impact your grass. Grass underneath is also not exposed to sunlight or air, which can also contribute to dead spots on the lawn. Additional impact is to lawn services and the smell that your neighbors will experience. Once or twice a day 'scooping' off your yard with a shovel or Grabber pet waste shovel will only take a couple of minutes and make it a place where everyone enjoys spending time.

If you are in the parks, dog parks, or walking the neighborhood, pick up the waste. If you are in the woods and cannot pick up the waste, BURY it. AND please pick up the waste from your yard. The Waste Management Service recommends a double bag so the waste does NOT break and dump out onto the street or ground. **SO Please pick up after your pets. Our health may depend on it.**